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"Because if the dead cannot live, neither do we": Postmemory and Passionate Remembering in Micheline Aharonian Marcom's Armenian Genocide Trilogy

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by

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Dedication

To the great ones, for surviving a century ago.

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"Because if the dead cannot live, neither do we": Postmemory and Passionate Remembering in Micheline Aharonian Marcom's Armenian Genocide Trilogy

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This dissertation is about a kind of memory that differs from commemoration or memorialization, a distinctively passionate commitment to and kind of remembering that, using the nomenclature of Marianne Hirsch, I call "postmemory." Theorists like Hirsch, Saidiya Hartman, and Walter Benjamin, along with other memory scholars from Holocaust and transatlantic slavery backgrounds, suggest that an explanation of postmemory can be found in the idea of the "imagination." But these scholars have yet to theorize the imagination's mediating role in rendering ancestral trauma productively constituent of the present. My contribution to memory studies centers on describing the relationship between memory and postmemory, particularly the theorizable site wherein and the operations whereby a process of mediation occurs. I make this contribution by analyzing Micheline Aharonian Marcom's Armenian Genocide trilogy which richly understands, explores, and narratively realizes the mediation of the imagination for the purposes of passionate remembering. Focusing on the life and work of Marcom, I uncover unique

aspects of postmemory for the Armenian diaspora that add nuance to theorizations of the phenomenon in both its particular and general appearances. My project also contributes to literary studies by offering the first sustained analysis of the under-discussed and yet highly decorated Marcom. By the end of Marcom's trilogy and my analysis of it, literary studies emerges as a venue for productively exploring postmemory.

Each of my analyses of Marcom's three novels clarifies the imagination in its mediating role between memory and postmemory. In my chapters, I identify the inherited memory—the "source material"—and how a person who desires passionate remembering imaginatively vivifies the memory. Chapter One argues that *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* reinvigorates storytelling through a contrastive imagination which redeploys plot elements and characters from deep Armenian history to tell new stories about a denied genocide. Chapter Two argues that *The Daydreaming Boy* describes how an insufficient sentimental imagination attempts to reinvigorate a prelapsarian past only to repeat the past's violences instead. Chapter Three argues that *Draining the Sea* depicts how an analogic imagination that reveals that sentience undergird conscience can forestall violence by encouraging victimized populations to feel solidarity with all mistreated others. The "Afterword" describes the pedagogic value of using literary studies and literature classes to examine postmemory.

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INTRODUCTION

"Never forget." These words are uttered after horrendous events to ensure that they are inscribed into collective memory. With these words, remembering gains a moral imperative. By making sure the event is preserved in collective memory, the dead are honored and lessons are learned from their deaths. In this way, the surviving generations do their part by making sure the dead did not die in vain. They take heart in believing that memory redeems both those who remember and those who were victims—the former is saved from repeating the mistakes of the past; the latter is saved from the depths of obscurity. In its moral and psychic functions, then, the maxim "never forget" emerges from the moral obligation to remember and includes a promise to seek redemptive outcomes through the commitment to the act of remembering itself.

This dissertation is about another kind of memory, a distinctively passionate commitment to and kind of remembering that, using the nomenclature of Marianne Hirsch, I call "postmemory." Or, to state matters more accurately, the "theory" contribution of this project to memory studies centers on the relationship between memory and postmemory, particularly the site wherein and the operations whereby a process of mediation occurs, one whose functional feature and effects can be theorized. The contribution of this project to literary studies is the first sustained analysis of the under-discussed and yet highly decorated contemporary Armenian-American novelist Micheline Aharonian Marcom. Marcom's family history, evolution as a novelist, and first trilogy not

only aspire to (what I will term) the effects of "postmemorial narrative"; her fiction is generated by the urgency of this special kind of passionate remembering. Moreover, her fiction explores the cognitive and affective negotiations that occur at the site of mediation, the place where the archives that inform the redemptive aspects of memory have, for those who passionately remember, become markers of an existential and affective deprivation. Postmemorial narratives, in the broadest sense, keep ancestral trauma productively alive, and they do so by vivifying some sustaining existential, affective, or critical truth that cannot be compartmentalized for psychological equanimity. This truth—which entails self-recognizing insights and an abiding possession of a trauma's emotional content—serves to give affirmative meaning to the present rather than to lay a distant past appropriately to its honored rest.

I develop my characterization of postmemory from two adjacent inquiries that I discuss briefly here but that I will expand upon in the next section of my introduction. In the first line of inquiry, I focus on the existence of the phenomenon itself as it is described and implied by thinkers of various disciplinary backgrounds. Focusing particularly on the works of Marianne Hirsch, Walter Benjamin, and Saidiya Hartman, I trace the way in which dual concerns with intuition and insight animate their attempts to "theorize" personal commitments to passionate remembering so as to conceive its character as a notably intense investment in the past, one within the province of a fundamental human experience occurring under the aspect—if no longer the experience—of ancestral trauma. These thinkers, as well as the larger community of memory

scholars, invariably—and perhaps inevitably—suggest that an explanation of passionate remembering is to be found in the idea of the "imagination." This line of reflection is correct. However, I argue, its theoretic value—its capacity to move the conversation from personal hauntings to a general human understanding of different kinds of remembering—is unrealized because the concept of the "imagination" itself, *relative to the issue at hand*, is misconstrued. In short, the mediation between memory and postmemory—the generative and structuring preconditions of postmemorial narrative and its distinctive effects—requires a functional understanding of the imagination in the process of mediation. And while imagination's functioning of course includes features of invention, figuration, and emplotment, its mediating role in rendering ancestral trauma productively constituent of the present has not yet been explained in the scholarly conversation. Its role has, however, been richly understood, explored, and narratively realized in Marcom's Armenian Genocide trilogy.

The adjacent line of inquiry includes my *description* of the conditions—temporal and psychological—that inform the urgency of passionate remembering and my *definition* of the phenomenon of postmemory from three vantage points, all of which are engaged in Marcom's fiction and, I would argue, need to be employed in a literary criticism appropriate to her novels. Marcom's novels make clear a predicament that is an old story for some Jews, African Americans, and certainly Armenians, amongst others. As the time between a traumatic event and its remembrance increases, the character and effects of memory simply become inadequate, and apparently—in some way and for some

afflicted people beyond the survivor generation(s)—this inadequacy is perceived as requiring more than an elegiac sensibility. For those who must passionately remember, ancestral trauma must be brought to life so that it can exist significantly in the experience of living. In this vein, postmemory can be variously described in terms of a psychic condition, or explained in terms of its existential/affective/critical outcomes, or conceived methodically as a cognitive operation. Let's take each of these features in turn. As a psychic condition, postmemory manifests itself as a deeply felt dissatisfaction. Instead of being contented because they have assimilated the lessons of the past and enshrined the dead in memory, those committed to passionate remembering feel dissatisfied with and detached from the archives and the profound emotional content they formerly communicated or otherwise monumentalized. For those significantly invested in remembering, we might say, this dissatisfaction occurs as the desire for a way of knowing and the possession of an affirming knowledge that, together, will prove distinctive for a self-recognizing sense of the past's immediacy and plentitude. Think of this desire and its object, in our more usual parlance, as the commitment to a "living past," one in which ancestral trauma is kept alive—not psychologically compartmentalized—so vividly that it functions as a crucial constituent for a meaningfully experienced present, and least for those who cannot do other than passionately remember. In this view, the outcome of the postmemorial experience—in my study, embodied in postmemorial narrative—is understood to contain self-informing existential, affective, and critical "truths" that make head and heart recognizable as such,

that make life in the present worth living. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the truths disclosed in the postmemorial environment are the products of the imagination. However, the function of the imagination in this instance is at once generative, transformative, and critical. And these three functions—(1) to generate a story-to-be-told from a desire-to-be-fulfilled; (2) to structure a transformative narrative of a living past, one whose preserved emotional content significantly defines life in the present; (3) to hold the world forever to account by housing the facticity of the historical record *within* the affective tenor of life in the present—come from the operations by which the imagination enables a *relationship between* memory and postmemory.

The orientation of my study within memory studies and toward Marcom's work is highly imbricated with the personal, with my family's history and my identity as an Armenian American. As a result, it is not quite accurate to say that I am applying the insights of memory studies to reading Marcom, let alone pragmatically deploying the term "postmemory" as a critical tool. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Marcom's novels spoke to aspects of my subjectivity that already included both personal experience and intellectual preoccupation. In a kind of feedback loop, Marcom's novels taught me how to recognize in memory studies a disciplinary ambition for methodical explanation that I am taking to be commensurate with the project that Marcom herself engages at the level of postmemorial narrative. For this reason, I am tempted to call my own critical enterprise here an expression and outcome of the phenomenon of postmemory.

Whatever the value of such critical self-consciousness, I trace Marcom's sustained representation of and reflection upon the postmemorial narrative experience though her trilogy. This experience occurs for the author herself through the act of composition and in the experience of reading itself, which is formally and thematically summoned, either to complete postmemorial narratives unto their value-laden effects, or to witness the failure of such narratives when they are made manifest in inhospitable conditions. In every case, I take the exploratory dimension of the writer's project to emerge from a proposition about the way imagination might be conceived to operate relative to its mediating function, its conversion of memory's diminishing returns into postmemory's living enrichments. Each of my readings of Marcom's three novels in her Armenian Genocide trilogy clarifies the operation of the imagination in its mediating role between memory and postmemory. In my chapters, I identify the inherited memory—what I call "source material"—and how a person who desires passionate remembering transforms the memory so that it comes alive through varied imaginative methods. Ultimately, my dissertation, I hope, will make the case that it is within the evocative realm of literature and through the explanatory ambitions of literary analysis that the effort to "theorize" the relationship between a faculty of the mind and an urgency of the heart can be methodically pursued.

In the following four sections of my introduction, I will summarize and synthesize theoretical and artistic conceptions of the phenomenon of postmemory; describe the unique position of the Armenian Genocide as an event

of memory; highlight the biographical details of Marcom's life that exemplify the phenomenon and make her work particularly suited for an exploration of postmemory; and outline the chapters in which I analyze Marcom's novels and their enactments and explorations of postmemory.

Theoretical and Artistic Conceptions of Postmemory

This is a dissertation about postmemory. To understand the phenomenon of postmemory, it's best to acknowledge that it is an experiential outcome occurring at the intersection of a human capacity (for remembering) and a human need (to remember passionately for the living present). As such, this human capacity and need can be appropriately termed a way of knowing, one amenable to explanations that describe its psychic condition, outcomes, and operations. In this section, I summarize the way that scholars and artists have conceptualized postmemory's main aspects in Holocaust studies (Marianne Hirsch, Henri Raczymow, Eva Hoffman, Cynthia Ozick), transatlantic slavery studies (Saidiya Hartman, M. Jacqui Alexander, Ron Eyerman), and philosophy of history and its traumas (Walter Benjamin). I see in these intellectuals a robust engagement with matters of conscience, historical reflection, and haunted personal remembrance that reveal the theorizable contours of postmemory and suggest a path to representing its methodical character. In these thinkers, then, we see a common intuition about the psychic conditions, existential/affective/critical outcomes, and cognitive operations that collectively occur in and therefore define the phenomenon of postmemory. Essentially, I offer

a map of the phenomenon of memory with its three major aspects—condition, outcomes, and operations—with the intent of locating its center.

These intellectuals intuitively recognize the psychic condition of postmemory as one marked by a specific dissatisfaction. Novelist Cynthia Ozick tellingly reveals her dissatisfaction with the archive of the Holocaust in her responses to criticism that she took excessive liberty with the historical record when she wrote *The Shawl*, her novella about a genocide survivor based on an event she read in a history book.[1] As Ozick sees it, "I *want* the documents [of the Holocaust] to be enough; I don't want to tamper or invent or imagine. *And yet I have done it. I can't not do it. It comes, it invades*" ("The Art of Fiction No. 95," emphasis mine). Compelled to do something with the documents of the Holocaust that she intuitively felt were insufficient, Ozick took factual liberties in her novella in order to become more intimate with a subject matter that she believed she'd already internalized and assimilated. A similar dissatisfaction drove scholar Saidiya Hartman to write her book *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*. In *Lose Your Mother*, Hartman explains that her project (which I'm here characterizing as postmemory) began after reading in the archive of transatlantic slavery, "the terrible utterances that condemned [the enslaved] to death, the account books that identified them as units of value, the invoices that claimed them as property, and the banal chronicles that stripped

[1] Ozick explains that "*The Shawl* began with a line, one sentence in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William Shirer. This one sentence told of a real event, about a baby being thrown against an electrified fence. And that stayed with me and stayed with me, and that was the very explicit origin of *The Shawl*" ("Reader's Guide to *The Shawl*").

them of human features" ("Venus in Two Acts" 3). While one value of the archive was its overall message—it describes property, not human beings—its cumulative effect upon Hartman was despair, as if the document re-enslaved her ancestors and thereby disconnected her from them: it's the old historicist problem, but now on a personal level. She tried diving into her own family history, but since "silences in my family were not unusual: slavery made the past a mystery, unknown and unspeakable," she was still left unsatisfied (*Lose Your Mother* 14). Without much help from either the archive or her family, Hartman decided to journey to Ghana, a country that had been the crossroads for so many slave routes, "determined to fill in the blank spaces of the historical record and to represent the lives of those deemed unworthy of remembering" (*Lose Your Mother* 16). As Hartman's experience makes clear, the archive can enable historical understanding or enforce existential disconnection from a subject matter, a professionally invested inquiry, or, as emphasized here, a deeply personal desire for human connection.

Even theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon of postmemory have recourse to the psychic condition of dissatisfaction. Marianne Hirsch understands the phenomenon as a response to a psychic condition that occurs when the "archive, in the case of traumatic interruption, exile, and diaspora, has lost its direct link to the past, has forfeited the embodied connections that forge community and society" (*The Generation* 33). There is a difference, I submit, in being frustrated by one's inability "to know" fully an important past, on the one hand, and feeling the need for a connection with the past, on the other. Literary

scholar Victoria Aarons notes this particular kind of dissatisfaction by arguing that "The post-survivor generation might be said to be plagued less by an absence of information (who did what to whom, when, and where) and more by an absence of immediacy, of felt sensation, the sights, sounds, and textures of experience" (142). The frustration and desperation that attend this dissatisfaction arguably informs the work of Walter Benjamin, and indeed is reflected in his pairing of two opposing figures: the Traditional Historicist and the Historical Materialist. In Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," the Traditional Historicist views history as "telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary," where events from the past are seen from the point of view of the "victor" and the story that is told shows that "all rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them" (Benjamin 263, 256). Each victor is a bead on the rosary of the Traditional Historicist who forges "a causal connection between various moments in history" (Benjamin 263). The Traditional Historicist thus makes connections between events of history for the principal purpose of bolstering the current regime. As sociologist Michael Löwy explains it in his monograph about Benjamin's famous essay, "the conformist pseudo-objective approach of [Traditional Historicist 19th century] writers like [Leopold von] Ranke and [Heinrich von] Sybel neutralizes and sterilizes the images of the past" (94). In the Traditional Historian's hands, the past becomes a dead thing to be manipulated for the purposes of the powerful. In contrast, Benjamin introduces a figure who expresses extreme dissatisfaction with the deadening methods of the Traditional Historicist. Benjamin's Historical Materialist expresses his dissatisfaction with

the homogenizing and totalizing narratives of traditional history by forging "a unique experience with the past" (Benjamin 262). The Historical Materialist relies not on the rosary beads of the Traditional Historicist but on the ephemeral "constellation which his own era has formed with the definite earlier one" (Benjamin 263). Not content with stringing victors like beads in a grand rosary-narrative, the Historical Materialist uses a different method because their "objective is to discover the critical constellation formed by a particular fragment of the past with a particular moment of the present" (Löwy 40). The desire for an embodied relation of past and present; for a mutuality of historical understanding and orientation in the present; for recognition of those who lived and died as implicated in self-recognition—when these frustrated desires comprise the psychic landscape, one is in the land of passionate remembering.

While these examples arguably suggest the manifestation of postmemory as a psychic condition, others describe this phenomenon in terms of existential outcomes. Ron Eyerman researched current generations of African Americans living in the shadow of slavery and coined the phrase "cultural trauma" to describe memories that transfer loss through generations in a cultural group. As Eyerman explains,

> Cultural trauma articulates a membership group as it identifies an event or an experience, a primal scene, that solidifies individual/collective identity. This event, now identified with the formation of the group, must be recollected by later generations who have had no experience of the "original" event, yet continue to be identified by it and to identify themselves through it. Because of its distance from the event and because its social circumstances have altered with time, each succeeding generation reinterprets and

> represents the collective memory around that event according to its needs and means. (Eyerman 15)

Eyerman's generational scale suggests that the legacy of transatlantic slavery is reconstructed over time to significant existential effect. In other words, contemporary African Americans experience their lives and find life meanings within a trauma-inflected context. If postmemory as a psychic condition calls forth passionate remembering, postmemory in its existential character requires keeping trauma alive.

Making life meaningful by keeping trauma alive is underscored by others in terms of affective outcomes. When writer Eva Hoffman argues that she feels a "living connection" with the past of her Holocaust survivor parents, she is actually articulating a relationship with the past that differs from her recollection and acknowledgment of the suffering of her parents, who hid in an attic before escaping to Canada (xv). Her "living connection" expresses an affective connection, a felt intimacy, that she knows by way of emotions more than as historical knowledge. The affective outcome of postmemory is also suggested by M. Jacqui Alexander when she describes her quest, in *Pedagogies of Crossing*, to know the life of a long-dead slave woman named Kitsimba who was later renamed by her owners as "Thisbe." She tellingly notes that her usual method of "[r]eading against the grain to fill in the spaces of an absent biography was simply not sufficient" (Alexander 294). Ultimately, Alexander successfully finds Kitsimba by spiritually communing with her. Through the imagined narration of

Kitsimba, Alexander herself makes the transition from engaging with an object of knowledge to experiencing the tactile touching of two equal selves. She:

> *had learned quite early, and in a way that did not serve her, that feelings had to be buried since they did not belong in the world of the living, except on auspicious occasions as when somebody died. So the ordinary feelings of daily life always eluded her; they came as a surprise to her. She found them excessive, almost always unexpected, out of the ordinary, for what was ordinary for her was to live devoid of feelings, having learned well to quietly predict the order of events, never their effects. I wanted her to feel the textured tapestry of my life in the soft markings of her flesh and through this feeling come to know it intimately, feel it as if she were the one who had lived it. She could no longer rely on what was written in books to convey or even arrive at Truth. What was written in those books was not even a faint shadow of me; it had nothing to do with me. They knew nothing about who I was.* (315, emphasis in original)

At the start of Alexander's research, she excluded her feelings and the feelings of her subjects. By the end, after the insufficient value of her archival research had been revealed, Kitsimba was able to move from a ghost to a presence in a way that enabled Alexander to feel what Kitsimba had felt as a slave, "as if [Alexander] were the one who had lived it" (315, emphasis omitted). In the end, Alexander herself is readied to receive the emotional truth of Kitsimba's story. This kind of affective knowledge is what I believe Hirsch is referring to when she speaks of the need to "*reactivate* and *re-embody* more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression" (*The Generation* 33, emphasis in original).

My pantheon of postmemory thinkers includes some who focus upon its critical outcome. In the case of postmemory, the outcome is not a revisionist history that describes the agency of the powerless or the constituting erasure of

the victim in the interests of a master narrative. I'm speaking here about housing the facticity of the historical record within the affective tenor of present life. For example, Hartman discovers that "If this *story of Venus* has any value at all it is in illuminating the way in which our age is tethered to hers. A relation which others might describe as a kind of melancholia, but which I prefer to describe in terms of the afterlife of property, by which I mean the detritus of lives with which we have yet to attend, a past that has yet to be done, and the ongoing state of emergency in which black life remains in peril" ("Venus in Two Acts" 13, emphasis in original). Hartman tells a different story of Venus, a slave girl who appears in the archive as property and dead girl, and ends with the insight that postmemory is neither memory nor history. It inhabits, inflects, and interferes in the present. The past "has yet to be done" because it is embodied in all the variables and agents at play in the murders of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and others ("Venus in Two Acts" 13). When Hartman calls this a "state of emergency," she is asking for the attentiveness, the recognition of obligations demanded by the cumulative effects and emotional affects of history. From these acknowledgments we can understand how to attend to the "lives with which we have yet to attend" ("Venus in Two Acts" 13). This postmemorial "knowledge," in Hartman's view, enables us "to interrogate rigorously the kinds of political claims that can be mobilized on behalf of the slave (the stateless, the socially dead, and the disposable) in the political present. In posing the question of slavery in terms of the incomplete nature of abolition, we are concerned neither with 'what happened then' nor with 'what is owed because of what happened

then,' but rather with the contemporary predicament of freedom, with the melancholy recognition of foreseeable futures still tethered to this past" (Best & Hartman, "Fugitive Justice" 5). In this sense, Hartman echoes insights made by Benjamin's Historical Materialist. This figure "recognizes the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history—blasting a specific life out of the era or a specific work out of the lifework" (Benjamin 263). The Historical Materialist selectively chooses the temporary connections she makes between the past and the present. In fact, as Benjamin scholar Löwy reminds us, the crucial task of the Historical Materialist is not depicting the past "the way it really was" for the victorious (a phrase that Benjamin borrows from a Traditional Historicist offender, the German historian Leopold von Ranke); their task "is not mere restitution of the past, but also active transformation of the present" (Benjamin 255, Löwy 34). This is the crucial maneuver of the Historical Materialist—recognizing the past as alive in the present. Accessing the ideals of revolutionary France or the squashed hope of slaves in early America is not about historical accuracy, but about how new understandings of the past mandate new demands in the present. As David L. Eng and David Kazanjian remind us in their edited collection, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, the critical outcome of work like Hartman's and Benjamin's Historical Materialist is that "the past remains steadfastly alive for the political work of the present" (Eng & Kazanjian 5).

Therefore, it is this critical outcome that joins the existential and affective outcomes of postmemory, and, specifically in this study, postmemorial narrative.

If postmemory yields crucial existential/affective/critical outcomes, it does so largely because of its particular cognitive operations, operations that scholars and creators of postmemory locate in particular aspects of the imagination. Many intellectuals have honed in on the imagination's generative capacity. Jewish-French novelist Henri Raczymow is an example. He admits that he inherited a memory "shot through with holes," a "memory devoid of memory, without content, beyond exile, beyond the forgotten" of his parents who escaped the Holocaust in Poland (Raczymow 102, 100). For Raczymow, his memory is full of gaps, not because he cannot remember the past, but because he never experienced that which he is remembering. He never knew the *shtetl* his parents came from, but he heard about it from his parents and he made the memory his own though he never experienced life in Poland while he was growing up in France. And yet, Raczymow intuitively knows that the "nostalgia of the generations of Jews born in France is not the same as the nostalgia of the generation born in Poland" (Raczymow 101). The generation from Poland relied on their lived experience to fondly remember the *shtetl*, whereas their French descendants "try to restore a non-memory, which by definition cannot be filled in or recovered" (Raczymow 104). Raczymow further articulates his own position as a writer whose works are set in the Poland, although he never lived there: "What is dead seems to me to be able to be restored only through the imagination, and not through history and bibliographical research, albeit they

have their own interest" (Raczymow 102; Raczymow, as quoted in Sicher 195). Knowing well that he desires something that he never experienced and that he can never *actually* experience, Raczymow instead focuses on the generative potential of his imagination to embody a meaningful reality, one whose communicated "truth" might even be counterfactual by regnant historical discourses. In the parlance of my study, Raczymow identifies one cognitive operation of the imagination as its capacity to generate a story-to-be-told from a desire-to-be-fulfilled.

Another operation of the imagination is to transform the past in ways that make its meanings constitutive for life in the present. Eva Hoffman has this operation in mind when she identifies herself as one member of the "hinge generation" between the past and the present. By her description:

> The story of the second generation is, above all, a strong example of an internalized past, of the way in which atrocity literally reverberates through the minds and lives of subsequent generations. That is the way the story is usually told: as personal, affective, intricately psychological. But the Holocaust past, aside from being a profound personal legacy, is also a task. It demands something from us, an understanding that is larger than just ourselves, that moves beyond the private vicissitudes of the inner life. The second generation after every calamity is the hinge generation, in which the meanings of awful events can remain fixed at the point of trauma; or in which they can be transformed into new sets of relations with the world and new understanding. How we interpret the implications of our primary narrative, how we translate psychic information into information about the world, matters for more than ourselves. (Hoffman 103)

Transferred memories of experiences are deeply felt by those who receive them, but for some this transference requires a real world response, the assumption of a purpose and the inhabiting of a point of view that stands, for the postmemorial

subject, as an inheritance and a birthright. The postmemorial imagination thus "transforms" by making a story of "loss" and pain into a story with personal and social content, a "gain" that keeps the pain usefully intact.[2] In Hoffman, then, we see a compelling call for the transformative narrative of a living past whose preserved emotional content significantly defines life in the present.

Along with the generative and transformative aspects of imagination, scholars and creators of postmemory have marked a third cognitive operation: the critical operation of the imagination. As Hirsch explains, those who experience the psychic condition of postmemory are motivated "more and more by affect, need, and desire as time and distance attenuate the links to authenticity and 'truth'" (*The Generation* 48). In this sense, the critical operation discussed here is the same as the critical outcome of postmemory previously discussed. This overlap in my theorizing project might well be taken to imply that postmemory *is* the imagination under the aspect and duress of historical trauma; that postmemorial narrative is the enactment of the urgencies within such an encumbered imagination in stories. Such may be the case. Nevertheless, the process of theorizing a phenomenon that is all at once intimately personal, behavioral, and cognitive requires that I separate the elements within this bewilderingly imbricated phenomenon. This requirement simply comes with the disciplinary territory, and one can see its power in the subject matters and writing styles of thinkers of postmemory trying to render profound experience as

[2] Jazz, for instance, is one way that the African American community kept their pain usefully intact.

self-affirming and socially-responsible knowledge. In fact, the focus of this study—Marcom's postmemorial trilogy—will demonstrate that the author is exploring the possibilities of various imaginative operations, as well as enacting them. Therefore, she herself is pragmatically conceiving the imagination as a separate entity, a means to an end. In any event, postmemory is not circumscribed by the limits of factual or documentary truth. In fact, postmemory responds to the "attenuation" of links to truth by housing the facticity of the historical record *within* the emotions of life in the present. So, this is not the past as it *was*; it is the past as we feel it *now*. Benjamin's Historical Materialist similarly locates the past's "truths" in their own present, an action which, as Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin argues, "transforms the past because the past takes on a new form, which could have disappeared into oblivion" (Gagnebin, as quoted in Löwy 41). In this sense, the past exists only in the transformed form the Historical Materialist gives it; the past's "truths" are located in the Historical Materialist's own affective inflections. Along with Hirsch and Benjamin, Hartman's articulation of her process of "critical fabulation" further illuminates the way that the imagination operates critically in postmemory. Since my study ultimately focuses upon postmemorial narrative, Hartman's description of the writing process she used in *Lose Your Mother* is particularly apt:

> By flattening the levels of narrative discourse and confusing narrator and speakers, I hoped to illuminate the contested character of history, narrative, event, and fact, to topple the hierarchy of discourse, and to engulf authorized speech in the clash of voices. The outcome of this method is a "recombinant narrative," which "loops the strands" of incommensurate accounts and which weaves

> present, past, and future in retelling the girl's story and in narrating the time of slavery as our present. ("Venus in Two Acts" 12)

Borrowing from visual artist Stan Douglass's concept of "recombinant narrative," Hartman allows the cacophony of voices, both imagined and unsatisfactorily documented, to clash with one another such that the facticity of the "official" version as documented in historical texts becomes more questionable than that of the imagined version. The "truth" in Hartman's work is that which locates "the time of slavery" in our present. Along with Hirsch and Benjamin, Hartman subscribes to the powerful critical operation of the imagination in postmemory which places facticity not in the storehouses of history, but in the affective and emotional tenor of life in the present.

The phenomenon of postmemory is wonderfully and exasperatingly amenable to mixed metaphors. It is a place we inhabit, where we stand, when our human capacity for remembering seems unequal to the need for passionately remembering an ancestral trauma. It is a potential-laden psychic condition of absent belonging, one that encourages us to envision our desires in existential, affective, and critical ways that both enable and require us to keep the trauma alive. It is the curse of an inheritance that we nonetheless cherish, in part because it ennobles, as well as calls forth, the perhaps uniquely adaptable power of the imagination to transition fading or routinely horrific experiences of memory to a differently invested kind of remembering, the formal, thematic, and affective features of which occur in the postmemorial narratives of Micheline Aharonian Marcom.

The Armenian Genocide as Event of Postmemory

In the previous section my ambitions were definitional and descriptive, particularly as they occur in the context of scholarly conversation. My interest now turns to the historical. My purpose is to represent how the phenomenon of postmemory organically emerges from the 1915 Armenian Genocide in Anatolia. Not only is the Armenian Genocide a living trauma in the consciousness of diasporic Armenians today; its character as an historical event included, from the start, fragmentary documentation, willful disruption of the paths of oral transmission, and a conspiracy of silence, which even today is the basis for the denial of its occurrence. No concentration camps were liberated; no perpetrators were identified; no baseline facticity was established.

As with the trauma of the Middle Passage, the Armenian Genocide was generationally transmitted through fragments. The degree and implications of the extreme "fragmentary" are significant here.[3] Following Hirsch, we know that survivors of traumatic events have various responses to their experiences which affect whether the experience is recounted, and if so, how it's told. For this reason, a now-unacceptably belated experience, postmemory if you will, is "shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension" (*The Generation of*

[3] Prominent memory scholars Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone remind us of memory's fragmentary nature in their work: "the characteristic features of 'traumatic memory'—its elisions, interruptions and reinventions—need bear no specific relation to an event, but rather can be seen to characterise the workings of memory in general" (97). Like the Holocaust, survivors of the Armenian Genocide told partial stories of their experiences because of the fragmentary nature of memory itself.

Postmemory 5). Implied here is the idea that something significant occurs in the relation of the survivor generation to successive generations. And this relation is as relevant to contemporary lives as the relation of the survivor to the atrocity itself is. To be sure, the relation of the victim to subsequent generations is characterized by often extreme reticence. Marilyn Charles and Michael O'Loughlin explain that "trauma fragments memory, [such that] telling the story is impeded by what is unknowable and what is unspeakable" (3). What is "unknowable" here could mean any kind of unknown: about the dead, about the perpetrators, about specific forgotten or repressed details of the experience. Adding to the "unknowable," is the "unspeakable": stories deemed too shameful or horrific to recount. In the case of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide, this expressive debilitation was more than individual; it was and is cultural. "Silences" do not just hinder the process of generational transmission; "silence" is the content of that transmission. Yes, Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller are correct in noting that oral histories display survivor repression of their traumatic experiences "when they dream about the massacre but try to suppress thinking about it during waking hours, when they refuse to tell their children and grandchildren their stories, when they remain silent while other survivors speak of their experiences, and when they avoid situations which require them to deal openly with the events of the massacre" ("Armenian Survivors" 61). Yes, Adam Jones correctly explains how survivors repressed the "unspeakable" by trying to forget in a manner that dulls the process of remembering, "convinced that no one will listen respectfully to their stories. Such was the case with many

survivors of the Armenian and Jewish holocausts, who spent decades after the events seeking to consign them to the historical past and build new lives" (Jones 350).[4] But these scholars are principally concerned with the challenge of rebuilding lives and forging a new identity, especially in the persistence of feelings of shame. As Miller & Miller explain, "One reason events are repressed is surely that they are too horrible to contemplate. But we also suspect that in some cases survivors' life histories are tinged with guilt and shame: memories of rape, forced nudity, humiliation of parents, the abandonment of siblings, coerced conversion to Islam, and so on" ("An Oral History Perspective on Responses to the Armenian Genocide" 192). However, if we shift focus to the issue of generational transmission, we ought to acknowledge that the massive silences of individual survivors also occurred as a cultural silence that reproduced the fragmentary historical record as an "experience" of the fragmentary for curious successor generations. In other words, in the Armenian diaspora case, subsequent generations were not only left with an incomplete historical record; they "knew" the archive itself as evidence of a fragmented survivor consciousness, and this is why the gaps register so powerfully on personal and cultural levels for those predisposed to passionate remembering. As one of the first survivors to document his experiences, Vahram Dadrian has lamented this fact by asking his fellow survivors:

[4] For more on how Holocaust survivors told or withheld stories of their experiences, see Hillel Klein & Ilany Kogan's "Identification Processes and Denial in the Shadow of Nazism" and Arlene Cahn's *The Capacity to Acknowledge Experience in Holocaust Survivors and Their Children*.

> We, the survivors, what have we been able to contribute to that blood-tainted story? The slaughter of our brothers who were victims of the Genocide, in all its hellish details; the epic tragedy of thousands of our compatriots, in all its heart-rending episodes; the struggle of our heroes as they drew their last breaths, in all its horror; none of these…have ever been presented to us in their strict entirety. A few articles in the press, memoirs, impressions…a few books and booklets, and that is it! Everything has been forgotten. (2)

In Dadrian's criticisms of survivors during the decades following the genocide, afflicted survivors transmitted silence to subsequent generations.[5] In the 1960s, to commemorate the 50th year anniversary of the start of the genocide, this afflicted cultural consciousness became visible to successor generations as survivors not only offered to their children and grandchildren fragmented accounts of their traumatic pasts; they revealed their fragmented cultural selves.[6] And this

[5] Even silences are inheritances. As Hirsch argues about the Holocaust, "nonverbal and non-cognitive acts of transfer occur most clearly within a familial space, often in the form of symptoms" (Hirsch, "The Generation" 112).

[6] Of course, there are the notable exceptions of prominent writers like Zabel Yesayan, who wrote about the earlier massacres of Armenians in *Among the Ruins*. Grigoris Balakian's *Armenian Golgotha* is another example of survivor testimony from pre-1965. Both of these texts were written in Armenian and later translated. Rouben Paul Adalian has described the situation as such: "Eyewitness and survivor accounts of the Armenian genocide were audiotaped and videotaped more than a half century after the events. That means the recorded testimony was provided by persons in their 70s and 80s who were reflecting upon a life that took a sudden turn when they were still children or very young adults. Hence, the problem of the great length of time that passed since the events of 1915 and the fact that those events were seen through the eyes of children who were looking at the world from their very narrow frames of reference needs to be kept in mind when dealing with testimony of this type" ("The Armenian Genocide" 76). And, as Razmik Panossian argues, "The diaspora had been commemorating the Genocide since the late 1910s. But after 1965 the commemorations were *reformulated*. Explicitly politicised in the diaspora, and implicitly in Armenia, the Genocide became the core of what it meant to be Armenian in the political domain (it was already central in the cultural, religious and psychological do- mains). Henceforth the personal

revelation, for those like Marcom, inaugurated the commitment to passionate remembering.

When it comes to the matter of the fragmentary as a characterization of consciousness, Saidiya Hartman's reflections upon transatlantic slavery are instructive.[7] In Hartman's view, their "archive is, in this case, a death sentence, a tomb, a display of the violated body, an inventory of property, a medical treatise on gonorrhea, a few lines about a whore's life, an asterisk in the grand narrative of history" ("Venus in Two Acts" 2). In this sense, the archival documents of transatlantic slavery inscribed the slave into its materials when marking her as property or criminal or object of experimentation. In the case of the Armenian Genocide, the archive is also more than unsatisfactory, too, but for a different reason. At the time of the genocide, the still-nascent technology of photography wasn't easily available to capture atrocities, and, as Tessa Hofmann and Gerayer Koutcharian have discovered in their research, any photographs that were taken

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experiences of a dying generation were passed onto the younger generations in a systematic and coordinated manner (annual commemorations, history texts, literature, etc.). In addition to the traditional realm of 'grandmother stories', the Genocide was placed squarely in the realm of collective identity. Private grief was transformed into a key symbol of Armenianness on 24 April 1965" (322, emphasis in original). See also Harutyun Marutyan's "Museums and Monuments: Comparative Analysis of Armenian and Jewish Experiences in Memory Policies."

[7] The Native American context of the fragmentary as a characterization of consciousness would also be useful here. For information about the Native American experience of transferred memories of traumatic resettlement and massacre, see Shelly A. Wiechelt & Jan Gryczynski's "Cultural and Historical Trauma Among Native Americans." For more on the experience of the inheritors of transatlantic slavery, see Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* and M. Jacqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*.

to document the genocide were destroyed or not allowed to leave the empire.[8] And, as mentioned earlier, many genocide survivors did not document their experiences until decades later. As a result, the absent archive in a sense enabled the continuation of the genocide over three years because, in the absence of photos, it was just "rumor." And this same absence of documentation, even now, in modern Turkey, functions as negative proof that no such even occurred.[9] The

[8] As Hofmann and Koutcharian summarize, German engineers and officials were forced by the Turkish military commissar Nizami to turn in all photographs and prints they'd made in 1915 while working on the Baghdad railroad which made them privy to the mass deportation of Armenians. Their research led them to a starting fact: "Ahmed Jemal Pasha, commander of the Fourth Ottoman Army in Syria—the primary deportation area for Armenians—imposed a strict ban on the photographing of deportees" (Hofmann & Koutcharian 54). Further, the photographs themselves were hard to take in the first place, as "For technical reasons too the number of visual documents directly related to the genocide of 1915 are relatively few: automatic cameras were still not available during World War I. At that time photography meant still photography and involved the arduous, time consuming adjustment of photographic plates" (Hofmann & Koutcharian 54).

[9] For more about the Republic of Turkey's official policy of denial, see Fatma Müge Göçek's *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and the Collective Violence against the Armenians, 1789-2009*, Vahakn N. Dadrian's *The Key Elements in the Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide: A Case Study of Distortion and Falsification*, Richard G. Hovannisian's "The Armenian Genocide and Patterns of Denials," and Israel W. Charny & Daphna Fromer's "Denying the Armenian Genocide: Patterns of Thinking as Defense-Mechanisms." The teaching of the Armenian Genocide also reflects its denial. In most countries, the Armenian Genocide is omitted from history lessons. In Turkey the events of 1915-1917 in Central Anatolia are deliberately taught and denied. As Belinda Cooper & Taner Akcam's research has shown, "Where schools previously provided no information on Armenians, in 2002 the Ministry of Education [in Turkey] mandated a grade-school curriculum that actively denied the genocide, calling Armenian claims 'baseless' and emphasizing Armenian separatism and the massacre of Turks under the Ottoman Empire. A 2003 directive encouraged student participation in essay contests on the 'Armenian Rebellion during the First World War.' Teachers were required to attend seminars on the 'Fight Against Baseless Claims of Genocide.' At one seminar, a teacher who questioned this formulation was briefly jailed and suspended" (Cooper & Akcam 86). For

fragmentary is not just a consequence of the genocidal event; it perpetuated the homicides and legitimizes denials of its occurrence. I'm here extending the work of Armenian scholars Marc Nichanian and Marie-Aude Baronian, who describe the Armenian Genocide's archive as being compromised from the beginning due to the cover-up of its perpetrators. Nichanian has argued that genocide perpetrators had only committed genocidal acts because they knew the lacunae they created in archival records would ensure they would not be forced to account for their crimes.[10] As Baronian explains it, "The denial of the Armenian Catastrophe starts with the very work of the archive. In other words, the deniers of the genocide have always already infected the archive with negation, and afterwards use the authority of the same archive to pursue their politics of denial; this is what I consider to be vicious and perverted in the discussion and treatment of the archive" (Baronian, "Image, Displacement, Prosthesis" 206). Essentially, the lacunae of the archive corrupted the evidentiary facticity of historical narrative, but in a manner that also generated a communal consciousness defined by the fragmentary and oppressed by silence, at least until the 1960s. And then the process of remembering began, for children and grandchildren as well as the still-living victims. Marcom represents all those who experienced this affliction of the fragmentary, the paradoxical complicity of the absent archive in the continuation of the tragedy, and the primal urge, at least as

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more on the pedagogical status of the Armenian Genocide, see Jennifer Dixon's "Education and National Narratives: Changing Representations of the Armenian Genocide in History Textbooks in Turkey."

[10] See Nichanian's *The Historiographic Perversion* and David Kazanjian & Marc Nichanian's "Between Genocide and Catastrophe" for details.

I see it, to deploy and investigate the imagination as a way of productively keeping the trauma alive, not as an affliction of the fragmentary, but in and as the postmemorial narrative of passionate remembering.

I would provisionally contend that, for a century now, Armenians have subscribed to the notion that they must use their imaginations to passionately remember the Armenian Genocide in order to access and live with its emotional truths.[11] As David Kazanjian observes:

> [Emotion] is usually in devalued opposition to logical, rational truth, and yet this particular Armenian truth, this genocide, as the historian [Justin McCarthy] pointed out, cannot be separated from its highly charged emotion. It is precisely the history with this emotional charge contained in the name *genocide* which is in some way the strategic mistake to hold on to. It violates traditions of historical objectivity enough to enable the possibility of a self-consciously interested historiography. On one level there needs to be a shift here away from standards of consistent truth in history and towards an interested truth that could free up this quest to follow other agents of this history, other "subjects." (Kassabian & Kazanjian 37, emphasis mine)

Micheline Aharonian Marcom's Life and Work as Exemplar for Entering and Inhabiting the Phenomenon of Postmemory

I want to tell the story of the writer whose life and work exemplifies the phenomenon of postmemory as experienced in the Armenian context, an

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[11] The famous Armenian poet Հովհաննես Շիրազ [Hovhannes Shiraz] wrote a poem, "Հայոց Դանթեականը" [meaning "The Armenians and Dante's Hell" and pronounced "Hi-oats Dan-teh-ah-gone-uh"], describing the plight of Armenians who must remember: "Սգա, Հայաստան, այս ժայռաշրթունք աշխարհը վկա՝ / Քո հին եղեռնը նոր շրթունքով էլ սգացող չկա, / Դու որ չսգաս՝ քո մարմնացավը ո՞վ է սգալու" ("Mourn, Armenia, the stone-faced world is a witness, / There are no new mourners to speak of your old colossal catastrophe, / For who shall mourn and feel your body's pain if you do not?") (Shiraz stanza 7, lines 5-7, translation mine).

engagement with the history and historical consciousness that define the Armenian Genocide. As my biographical sketch of Armenian American novelist Micheline Aharonian Marcom will attest, Marcom intuited those emotional understandings characteristic of the phenomenon of postmemory, in part, through the process of becoming a celebrated writer. Understanding each of the aforementioned aspects of postmemory—its psychic condition, its cognitive operation, and its outcomes—Marcom eschewed the genre of the family saga we see in texts of the Armenian diaspora. This genre emphasizes identity in the context of family belonging. Although an important and perhaps adjacent subject matter, identity formation does not necessarily put keeping trauma alive in and constitutive for the present, and it does not regard the function of the imagination in producing postmemorial effects as the privileged understanding.

Marcom's literary career over the past decade and a half is full of successes and struggles. She was awarded a Lannan Foundation Literary Fellowship and joined the ranks of rising contemporary writers who had won the fellowship previously, like Edwidge Danticat, Lorrie Moore, and George Saunders. She has been the recipient of the Whiting Writers' Award previously won by Christina Garcia and William T. Vollmann. She has won the PEN/USA Award for Fiction, joining her mentor Maxine Hong Kingston on the list of writers who have distinguished themselves in literary excellence. She was one of six writers in 2012 to win a United States Artist Award, alongside her peers Aleksandar Hemon, Cherie Moraga, Helena Maria Viramontes, and Harryette Mullen. Her novels have been named among the Best Books of the Year by *Los*

Angeles Times, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. But it is true that her writing career had an inauspicious beginning. As Marcom recounts: "I never thought I'd become a writer, and I certainly never thought I'd be writing about the Armenian Genocide. But I started writing in my early 20s, a relationship ended—that's what heartache does, I suppose, [it] pushed me, in any case, to express in language what I was experiencing internally" (Marcom, "Of Political Violence and Lost Love"). So, she began "to write (badly, [Marcom herself has] stressed," and was twice rejected by San Francisco State University's MFA program (Polain 293; Kiefer). The truth is that Marcom's eventual ascent to literary heights required her internalization and assimilation of the experience of postmemory.

It took two separate, foundational events to create the dissatisfaction—the psychic condition—that would motivate Marcom to look at the genocide her grandparents survived from a postmemorial point of view, one that would resist, as indicated earlier, the "never again" agenda. In her late twenties, Marcom began "teaching a group of disadvantaged teenagers—whom she describe[s] as African-American, Latino, Asian—who never stopped talking about their identity, which made her seriously consider, it seems for the first time, her own" (Polain 293). Working for Berkeley public schools as a "bilingual tutor and teacher" (which she remembers as the "most stressful thing I've ever done") and running the Upward Bound program at Oakland's Mills College reminded Marcom of her Armenian heritage and forced her to attend to her own specific identity as an Armenian American descended from genocide survivors (Kiefer).

The intense shame Marcom felt for not having a genuine emotional investment in her own ethnic background encouraged her to see her hazy Armenian past not only as a shortcoming of respect for family, but also as an absent part of her own make up. A second foundational event made her feel even greater shame for not knowing enough about her family's past: Marcom "ran headlong into denialism" that the genocide ever happened (Polain 293). In 1995, six years before she published a novel set in Central Anatolia during the Armenian Genocide, Marcom had a passionate argument with her former husband's friends from Istanbul. During a meal with the Turkish couple, Marcom mentioned the Armenian Genocide that her own grandmother had survived in 1915. As soon as she brought up the genocide, their night of mirth and merriment was ruined, and as Marcom describes it, "a great chasm opened up in the middle of the table" (Marcom, as quoted in Krikorian). The Turkish woman, Meltem, began a "tirade" and "said all the usual stuff. 'There was a civil war. It was not genocide. Many Turks died too'" (Marcom, as quoted in Krikorian). The argument with Meltem was the first time that Marcom was called upon to respond to the demeaning designation of "civil war" for the events of 1915-1917 in Central Anatolia that she had always known as *genocide*. In one sense, she felt called upon to set the record straight one disbeliever at a time, and Marcom believed she'd ultimately failed in changing Meltem's mind. But, in another sense, she also realized that she was being called to defend herself, to express who she felt she was as a person, with a history, in a culture. Six years after the argument, Marcom still describes the experience in a *Los Angeles Times* article publicizing her newly-published novel

with "a lot of shame": "All I knew was she was wrong, but I didn't know much more than that. I couldn't back it up" (Marcom, as quoted in Krikorian). The "more than that," of course, reflects the enormity of the stakes. She could no more agree to disagree over the reality of the genocide than to agree to disagree about whether she existed at all. At the time of the argument, the Armenian Genocide was something Marcom intellectually knew about in a general way. She knew the contours of the story from the handful of sentences she'd heard about her family's experiences from her mother, and yet the event was mythic in proportion, perhaps beyond imagining: *the Turks killed 1.5 million Armenians in Central Anatolia*. She had no specific details to offer Meltem to convince her that the experience of Marcom's ancestors was real. Dissatisfied with how the evening ended, ashamed that she didn't know more about the genocide her own ancestors had survived, Marcom left the table in search of historical knowledge, the stuff of documents and monuments. She read survivor memoirs, consular reports, and histories of the Armenian Genocide, and after "poring through it all, she decided to write a novel" (Krikorian).

Marcom's choice to write a novel instead of a history self-evidently indicates she sought to work in the realm of imaginative literature, but it doesn't quite explain how she came to realize that her interests would be resolved within the orbit of postmemorial concern, including an interest in narrative structure that would be informed by the postmemorial operations of the imagination. Marcom explains her reasoning for writing a novel instead of a history: "The novel (especially, perhaps, the post-modern novel) can embrace any kind and all

kinds of narratives: the historical tracts, the newspaper article, letters, myths, etc. as does *Three Apples Fell From Heaven*. It is perhaps a more-inclusive narrative than the historical one, more truthful, even, if I can be so bold" (Marcom, in Merjian 8). It took Marcom a while to discover the kind of truth—the need to keep trauma alive—she was aspiring to when she set out to write her first novel while a student in the MFA program in Creative Writing at Mills College in 1997. Initially, Marcom wanted to use the novel to tell her grandmother's story of survival, to "write about my grandmother, fill in the handful of sentences I had inherited from my mother" (Marcom, "Armenian Genocide Commemoration Speech"). Since the last time that Marcom saw her grandmother alive was when she was five, Marcom did not have her grandmother's guiding narrative to help her tell the story (Marcom, "Armenian Genocide Commemoration Speech"). In her grandmother's stead, Marcom turned to published works, like the one she'd been given by her grandfather about Ambassador Henry Morgenthau's eyewitness account, to learn about the place her grandmother lived in Turkey before the Armenian Genocide (Marcom, "In Her Own Words" 51). She describes the project's beginning as a time when she "did a tremendous amount of research to write the book, and wrote scenes that were often directly inspired by my research" (Marcom, as quoted in Davis-Van Atta 142). But the source material she encountered stimulated Marcom's imagination. As the novel emerged, Marcom's writing experience shifted: "While writing the book, I also, inexplicably to me at the time, wrote pieces which were more in the mythical/fantastic realm. Basically, I wrote where I felt inspired and/or

obsessed" (Marcom, as quoted in Davis-Van Atta 142). Marcom's description of the process of writing *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* reveals her own surprise at how the novel turned out. She admits that, "although I thought, when I first began, that I would only write about my grandmother, I realized very quickly that novels take on a life of their own. So while I began with the character Anaguil, based on my grandmother, soon other characters in the town showed up, inspired by what I read, by the memoirs, and historical accounts, and photographs, even, as if they too wanted to be written. I learned to let their voices be heard" (Marcom, "Armenian Genocide Commemoration Speech"). In this sense, while the source materials Marcom encountered in her research generated her imaginative constructions, her imagination worked to transform the received stories and images toward *felt* rather than *dramatic* urgencies. Elsewhere, Marcom explains that "*Three Apples Fell From Heaven* is not the novel I set out to write; I could never have predicted its final form. The form emerged as the novel evolved, a form determined by the subject matter itself, a stop and start movement which in some ways mimics the movement of memory and of forgetting" (Marcom, "In Her Own Words" 52). The story that Marcom's polyphonic novel tells wasn't the story she thought she'd write. She had researched the Armenian Genocide and the town of Kharphert (now called Harput) in Central Anatolia so that she could fill in the details of her grandmother's story of survival, but other voices, characters, and stories barged in uninvited. Bewildered and surprised by her novel, Marcom ultimately arrived at a realization: though her "obsessions" and her "mythical/fantastic" vignettes

were inspired by and launched by her research, they diverge from their inspirations in unexpected ways. Crucially, her process of learning about the Armenian Genocide inadvertently required imagining a self-recognizing intimacy with the past, one so authentic that, even before the formal and thematic dimensions of craft were secured, she knew that her imagined story was "truer" than history, that

> fiction is unconstrained by "the facts" and consequently freer to do its work, to tell the truth, because truth is not always found in "the facts" you see. The best fiction gives us insight into being, seeks meaning and pattern and beauty. And there is the way in which these grand sweeping "histories" always leave out what actually happened to the people. Where would you read about the tattoos on your grandmother's neck that the Bedouin gave her in a history book? Or me, where would I find my grandmother saving her brothers and sister and hiding with a Turkish family and escaping to Beirut? (Marcom, as quoted in Merjian 7)

These unexpected imaginary diversions turned out to be the afterlife of a desire for a passionately remembered truth possessing existential, affective, and critical importance. Marcom ultimately concluded that "the making of stories and books [is] the way in which I feel most alive. That it is something I have to do" (Marcom, "Armenian Genocide Commemoration Speech"). Elsewhere, Marcom has admitted that, for her, "The novel is a form that can contain all my obsessions, and it can have an absolute truth. It can help you figure out how to live" (Marcom, as quoted in Kiefer). Writing a trilogy that enables and enacts passionate remembering is what, I believe, Marcom means when she says: "art makes things meaningful" (Marcom, as quoted in Kiefer). Truly, Marcom's trilogy acknowledges the insight that one of her characters discovers in her third

novel, *Draining the Sea*: "Because if the dead cannot live, neither do we" (Marcom, *Draining the Sea* 190). In her trilogy, Marcom achieved lifelong existential, affective, and critical payoffs that were only available to be accessed through the passionate remembering of postmemory.

Part of understanding Marcom as a literary exemplar of the postmemorial narrative is noting her uniqueness among contemporary writers of the Armenian diaspora. The problems of the Armenian Genocide as an event of memory I have already described—its fragmented transmission, its relative lack of archival material, and the denial of its occurrence—have been variously addressed by other writers of the Armenian diaspora in their fictional works. As Marie-Aude Baronian has argued, "fiction is an appropriate response to a genocide that is still considered to be a fictional event or an event that did not leave any traces" (Baronian, "Image, Displacement, Prosthesis" 206). Given the frustrations and debilitations that occur for people whose genocidal trauma is denied, writers from the third generation following the Armenian Genocide understandably chose the fictional "family saga" to write their stories. These writers include Nancy Kricorian (who wrote *Zabelle*), Carol Edgarian (*Rise the Euphrates*), Chris Bohjalian (*The Sandcastle Girls*), Aline Ohanesian (*Orhan's Inheritance*), Marcella Polain (*The Edge of the World*), Peter Balakian (*Sad Days of Light*), and Gregory Djanikian (*So I Will Till the Ground: Poems*). These Armenian writers tell different personal stories, but they share the aesthetic choice to depict the interrelations of three generations (the survivor, their children, and their grandchildren) in a

single "family saga."[12] I call this genre the "family saga" because these authors often address the problems of the Armenian Genocide by asserting the truth of inherited family stories while simultaneously depicting the struggle of members in surviving generations who variously attempt to assimilate the stories into their own diasporic existence.[13] These are stories of the struggle to preserve Armenian identity through memories of the Armenian Genocide that diasporic Armenians carry within them as they negotiate their assimilation into a larger, dominant culture.[14] For this reason, scenes of discovery appear throughout the narratives:

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[12] *Zabelle* was published in 1998, *Rise the Euphrates* was published in 1994, *The Sandcastle Girls* was published in 2012, *Orhan's Inheritance* was published in 2015, Սեմեր was published in 1994, *The Edge of the World* was published in 2007, *Sad Days of Light* was published in 1983, *So I Will Till the Ground: Poems* was published in 2007. All were originally written in English. And all but *The Edge of the World* were written by Armenian Americans (Polain is a half-Armenian who lives in Australia). All but *Sad Days of Light* and *So I Will Till the Ground* are novels (the aforementioned two are poetry collections). Astute readers of contemporary Armenian literature would note a large omission in this list. This notable omission is the fantastically innovative and important work of Krikor Beledian, an Armenian French intellectual and novelist, whose novel written in Western Armenian, Սեմեր [*Thresholds*, pronounced "Sem-ehr"], also tracks three generations of Armenians living in the shadow of the Armenian Genocide. Marcom emerged as the English-language equivalent of Beledian for my dissertation, but I intend to analyze Beledian's work in my subsequent scholarly and intellectual work.

[13] Though the family saga is the privileged form for many writers of Armenian descent working today, their concerns with identity are shared by writers who also create different genres of postmemory outside the Armenian community. Recent work in postmemory from those writers who inherited memories of the Holocaust—writers like Art Spiegelman, Eva Hoffman, Henri Raczymow, and Marianne Hirsch—exhibit a similar focus on asserting identity. Because "To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors," these writers had to assert their own selves or risk disappearance (Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory* 5).

[14] As Jennifer Manoukian reminds us, "The daily struggle to carry on faced by the first generation in exile was replaced by the second and third generations'

the assimilated grandchildren of the survivors find out about their grandparents' pasts through fits and starts, through research or prodding, or through an accidental turn of events.[15] Theirs is a memorable, touching, and legitimate approach to capturing the human dimension of the Armenian Genocide, for the purpose of forming an ethnic or diasporic identity by honoring a traumatic past.

Ethnic or diasporic identity are probably adjacent concerns of my study. Nevertheless, Marcom's trilogy itself focused my interest on imaginative transformations of the past that allow for passionate remembering. When I looked at the spectrum of third generation diasporic Armenian novels, I could not find such a project as Marcom's. Her choice to diverge from the family saga structure with her trilogy was a deliberate one, since she herself has admitted in interviews that "she didn't write the Genocide survival story in a conventional three-generational structure, implying that structure is too obvious" (Polain, "Micheline Aharonian Marcom" 293). Not only was the structure "too obvious"; it might not be the best form if the event was never personally lived through by the writer, since "I didn't have that experience, so it is a leap of the imagination" (Kiefer). The novels in her trilogy separate the generations and do not make

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emotional, abstract struggle over identity and belonging. This is the second stage of suffering that diasporan Armenians experience. It is how they feel about what they have absorbed and imagined from the stories about the first stage" (Manoukian).

[15] *The Sandcastle Girls* includes a writer who researches her ancestors' past after encountering a photograph of an emaciated woman who shares the same last name in an exhibition of materials on the Armenian Genocide. Both *Rise the Euphrates* and *Zabelle* depict the transfer of stories from grandmother to grandchild. *Orhan's Inheritance* stages the scene of discovery differently, to describe how a Turkish man learns that his deceased grandfather loved an Armenian woman whose family house he eventually took as his own.

explicit family connections between the characters. Marcom separately imagines the experiences of survivors and infant orphans of genocide, and even their assimilated grandchildren. But the informing principle of structure is not the recognition of a family-centric belonging. Marcom instead focuses on the efforts of different characters to passionately remember the Armenian Genocide through various imaginative means. Essentially, in her novels, Marcom enacts and explores different methods of investing personal meaning into a historical trauma never personally experienced. Because of my interest in the relationship between memory, postmemory, and the imagination, I found Marcom's groundbreaking trilogy especially compelling amongst the available choices of Armenian texts I could examine in my dissertation.

Marcom's unique novels and her life story together identify the mediating imagination between memory and postmemory as the focal point of her creative and personal investments in a novelistic practice, one that I term the "postmemorial narrative": 2001's *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, 2004's *The Daydreaming Boy*, and 2008's *Draining the Sea*. In other words, to write about the leap of imagination necessary for postmemorial effects and affects, Marcom had to take such a leap herself.

Chapter Summaries

In this final section of my introduction, I describe my interpretations of Marcom's trilogy based on the crucial insight I learned from Marcom about the mediation of the imagination between memory and postmemory. In each

chapter, I identify the inherited memory—what I call "source material"—and the way in which a person who desires passionate remembering imaginatively transforms the memory such that it comes alive in and for the present.

In Chapter One, I argue that Marcom's *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* proposes an imagination that operates by redeploying plot elements and characters from deep Armenian history to display a contrastive model for passionate remembering. Specifically, I divide Marcom's imaginative method into three parts: (1) establishing an "archive" from various collected source materials that unsatisfactorily describe some feature of the past the novel helps its eavesdropper passionately remember; (2) using the contrastive imagination to transform each of these slender archives such that they keep the traumatic past meaningfully alive in the present; and, (3) producing postmemorial effects of ideational and affective import for the eavesdropper to live by through the operation of the contrastive imagination, which posits salutary "truths" immanent in the preserved feature of the trauma. This novel thereby discloses rumor-mongering's ability to defeat the genocidal ambition to destroy stories; despair's transformation into an energizing, implacable anger that refuses "false" stories of genocide denial; and postmemory's commitment to keeping trauma alive as a way to recognize the historicity of the present for both self-reflexive and self-reflective purposes. In this way, *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* begins Marcom's enactment and exploration of the mediating imagination in postmemory by realizing in form and affect its positive effects.

Chapter Two argues that, with *The Daydreaming Boy*, Marcom moves from the positive depiction of successfully mediating imagination to an incompletely functioning imagination, which produces an unrealized postmemorial experience that corrodes sentience and confines vision. These negative effects are shown in Marcom's second novel to be largely the consequence of a desire to passionately remember that founders upon the inability of the protagonist's imagination to reconfigure the available archive such that he can escape its haunting silence. As a result, the novel's troubled main character suffers a destructive attempt to passionately remember that repeats the degrading experience of the past. His ambition for existential plentitude is indeed impelled by the sense of frustration I have posited as an informing psychic condition of postmemory. However, the protagonist attempts to transform his slender archive by employing a "sentimental imagination" whose operation cannot produce life-enriching effects and affects. Feeling anxious and degraded in modern Lebanon, he distorts a foundational conviction beneath any diaspora situation—though you might not be able to physically return "home," you can always "return" in passionate remembering—such that he repeats the violence.

My argument about *Draining the Sea* in Chapter Three is that Marcom provides a corrective to *The Daydreaming Boy*'s insufficient sentimental imagination by placing analogy at the center of the imagination's mediation between memory and passionate remembering. The protagonist of Marcom's third novel interrogates the malaise that characterizes his prosperous American life by way of an analogic imagination, ultimately acknowledging his diasporic

existence in a manner that invigorates his conscience, his sense of his life's implication in his own Armenian history and in genocidal massacres in the contemporary world. The man eventually recognizes the ever-present sadness of the past that lurks beneath his comfortable malaise and then transforms that sadness into an emotional portal, one that opens him up to a sense of connection and a call to principle that encompasses a pan-ethnic and pan-national attention to human rights. This becomes the way to avoid a repetition of violence and subjugation and to find an expansion of transnational consciousness. In fact, the man in *Draining the Sea* makes good on the promise of postmemory: that a deeply felt past encourages victimized populations to feel solidarity and affinity for the mistreated other, ultimately forming transformative and long-lasting affective affiliations that could forestall violence in the present and the future.

In my concluding "Afterword," I describe the pedagogic potential for engaging the phenomenon of postmemory in the undergraduate classroom. My observations derive from my experience teaching an upper-division literature course, "Not Even Past: Imagining Painful Histories," in the summer of 2014 with funding from the College of Liberal Arts.

In my dissertation's focus on the life and work of Marcom, I uncover unique aspects of postmemory for the Armenian diaspora that add nuance to theorizations of the phenomenon in both its particular and general appearances. But, because the imagination is at the center of Marcom's trilogy and my analysis of it, literary studies emerges as a venue where postmemory can be productively

explored. At heart, this dissertation makes a case for the value of literature and its study for understanding the phenomenon of postmemory.

THE PAST REDEPLOYED: STORYTELLING & CONTRASTIVE POSTMEMORY IN *THREE APPLES FELL FROM HEAVEN*

Three Apples Fell from Heaven, Micheline Aharonian Marcom's 2001 novel set during the Armenian genocide of 1915-1917 in Central Anatolia, begins with a dedication page made of two parts: the words "For Nane and Dede," and the lyrics to an Armenian love song: "Նորից գարուն եկաւ, գարուն աննըման" ["New spring arrived, a spring unlike any other"].[16] The diminutives "Nane and Dede" for "grandmother" and "grandfather" reveal Marcom's intimate connection with the maternal grandparents to whom she dedicates her book. The song lyrics on the dedication page highlight the connection, since the lyrics are plucked from a song that Marcom associates with her grandmother. As Marcom tells it, when she started *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, "I'm 27: I think I am depressed," but "a tune started running in my head, and this tune stayed with me for days, like the ghost of something, as if someone had erased a black charcoal drawing on paper but the faint outlines were still there" (Marcom, "Armenian Genocide Commemoration Speech"). The ghostly tune wouldn't leave Marcom alone. The unrecognized sound kept hounding her. She didn't know the lyrics to the song in her head, but the melody had taken up permanent residence in her mind. On a whim, she sang the unrelenting melody to her mother, who burst into tears. Marcom's mother tearfully explained that the song

[16] Throughout this chapter, I will provide rudimentary phonetic pronunciation guides for Armenian words in Western Armenian, the dialect I speak. Here's how to pronounce "Նորից գարուն եկաւ, գարուն աննըման": "Nor-eetz kah-roon yeh-gahv, kah-roon an-nuh-mahn." The translations provided here and in the rest of the chapter are my own.

was a favorite of Marcom's grandmother, Anaguil, who survived the Armenian genocide and died in Beirut when Marcom was 9. To Marcom, "when that song came back to me from the ether, it felt like a sign. As if my grandmother were trying to tell me something almost two decades after her death, that I must remember, that I must write it down and make a book of it. That I could do it. In any case, I made a promise to her then that I would try my best" (Marcom, "Armenian Genocide Commemoration Speech"). Marcom interpreted the recalled song about a lover who reappears every spring as a message from her grandmother, a call to write her grandmother's experience of surviving the Armenian genocide in Central Anatolia at the beginning of the twentieth century by gathering her four younger siblings and escaping to Beirut. She heeded the call.

Yet the book that Marcom wrote to heed that call is a polyphonic tapestry wherein her grandmother's story of survival is just one of the threads. Indeed, Marcom already signals her departure from a strict retelling of her family's experience with the song lyrics that she reprints on her dedication page. The song lyrics are the first lines of the folk song, "Ճէյրանի Պէս" ("Like a Doe"), a song whose history itself combines old and new.[17] According to Armenian ethnomusicologist Sylvia Alajaji, "Ճէյրանի Պէս" was an Armenian folk song "that at one point had been harmonized by the choir directors" of Lebanon who strove to preserve traditional Armenian culture in a new diasporic community

[17] "Ճէյրանի Պէս" is pronounced "Jey-rahn-ee Bes."

(Alajaji 210). This older folk song became an international Armenian hit in the 1970s when superstar Lebanese-Armenian singer Adiss Harmandian made it one of the "traditional Armenian folk songs that were updated and sung in a thoroughly Westernized pop setting" (Alajaji 203).[18] Further, as reprinted on Marcom's dedication page, the first lines of "Ճէյրանի Պէս" highlight the song's simultaneously old and new nature. Readers of Armenian would notice the idiosyncratic spelling of the word "աննըման" ("unlike").[19] Where contemporary Western Armenian speakers would write "աննման," in Marcom's dedication an extra "ը" appears between the two letters "ն".[20] With the added letter, the spelling takes on a decidedly nostalgic bent, since it is the way that the word is spelled in older songbooks.[21] When Marcom uses the older spelling of the song,

[18] Sylvia Alajaji's 2009 dissertation, "Diasporic Communities and Negotiated Identities: Trauma, Recovery, and the Search for the Armenian Musical Voice," on Armenian diasporic music, summarizes well the iconic function Adiss Harmandian played in the Beirut Armenian community as part of the *estradayin* music movement (see, especially, pages 178-216).

[19] "Անման" is pronounced "ahn-nuh-mahn."

[20] The letter "ը" is called "uht," and the letter "ն" is called "noo" in the dialect of Armenian that I speak, Western Armenian. For Eastern Armenian speakers, the letters are often called "uh" and "nuh." See J.J.S. Weitenberg and John A.C. Greppin & Amalya A. Khachaturian for information about Armenian dialects.

[21] While there is some controversy about whether or not epenthesis, or the addition of one or more sounds typically to the interior of a word, was an active process in Classical Armenian, I'm most interested in the orthographic and not phonological side of the debate. In the case of orthography, Avedis K. Sanjian insists that the "letter ը ə [pronounced "uh"] is rarely written, even though shwa is the most common vowel in spoken Armenian" (360). Further, Armenian linguist Amalia Khachaturian has posited that "In most instances, irrespective of its historical origin, ə has the function of a vowel prothesis in consonant clusters. In word building it is apt to phonetic shortening up to its full reduction. In these cases ə has the function of a syllabic vowel, and *since it is not conveyed in*

she brings an outdated orthography into her modern, English book. Interestingly, the older orthography actually aids pronunciation in the present. The added letter more closely resembles how an Armenian speaker would pronounce the word (pausing between the two twinned letters), akin to writing out *kibosh* as "kiybosh" to help with saying the word out loud. For multiple reasons, the song is an apt representative for Marcom's project in *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*: the song was a traditional one popularized by a pop singer in his cosmopolitan moment; the older spelling of part of its lyrics unexpectedly makes the pronunciation of the lyric easier; and, the song was the manifestation of Marcom's grandmother's haunting voice calling her to write about the past in her present. In all three cases, the past is redeployed in the present to achieve enriched and enriching effects. These aspects of the song reveal an investment in the past's role in the present, an investment in passionately remembering the past in the present moment because it offers new emotional and intellectual insights. Essentially, the song and Marcom's experience with it—its initially haunting arrival in the present, its unusual reprinting in the novel to more closely align with its pronunciation—encapsulates the phenomenon that

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orthography, it is often called 'a secret syllable' (gałtnavank). Examples: təxur 'sad', kərknel or kərkənel 'to repeat', kəřunk 'crane', kətur 'ceiling', dəproc 'school', xəlurd 'mole', t'əmbuk 'drum', kəřiv 'war', etc." (Khachaturian 56, emphasis mine). For more information on the phonological and lexical debate, see Frederick W. Schwink's and Marc Pierce's articles. In any case, "անդրման" is far less commonly used than "անման" in current writing. After checking numerous dictionaries, I couldn't find a single entry of "անդրման" or "դրման." In my research, the only examples of the spelling with the extra "դ" are in older songbooks.

theorists have called *postmemory*, including my emphasis on keeping the content of ancestral trauma alive.

I use the song's enactment of postmemory as a model for explaining the way that Marcom's polyphonic, fragmented, and formally difficult novel about the Armenian Genocide treats storytelling itself as the access to and realization of postmemorial effects, and does so in a manner that explores the potential of an imagination that operates by contrast. The novel is polyphonic in that each chapter is narrated from a different character's point of view. In one chapter, a deceased baby named Dickran offers three possible scenarios for what happened to him in the Deir al-Zor desert to his unnamed listener. Another chapter is narrated by Rachel Eskijian, who never admits that she committed the crime of suicide, but who lists all the reasons why she did anyhow. Still others are narrated by a young scholar named Sargis who slowly goes mad in an attic hiding from the gendarmes, while another pair of chapters are told by the personified character of Rumor, who offers the long history of the Armenians in the Anatolian plains. A trio of chapters end with the Anatolian storytelling convention the novel is named after, "And three apples fell from heaven: one for the storyteller, one for the listener, and one for the eavesdropper."[22] Taken

[22] Marcom names her novel after the terminal storytelling convention used by Anatolian—Turkish and Armenian—storytellers. Armenian storytelling has its equivalent of "once upon a time" with "կար ու չկար," which is pronounced "gahr oo chuh-gahr" and roughly translates to "there was and there was not." It also has its version of the terminal convention of "And they all lived happily ever after." Armenian stories end with a variation of the formula that begins with "Երկինքէն երեք խնձոր ինկաւ" (translated as "Three apples fell from heaven" and pronounced "yer-geenk-en yeh-rek khun-tsor een-gahv"). Depending on

together, these multiple voices represent the telling of stories and their deployment for transformative postmemorial ends that are existential, affective, and critical rather than commemorative and redemptive. In *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, the mediating function of the imagination works by contrast: Contrasting iconic images and plots from an ancient Armenian past with their perversion in the genocidal moment, Marcom transforms the recollection of stories and fragments into a new ownership of their enduring emotional and defiant contents, which ultimately belong to the author herself when the reader—who takes the apple that falls to the eavesdropper—assumes his or her role as required, in the present moment, by the ancient storytelling convention.

In one sense, then, trauma is kept productively alive because the storytelling convention is kept alive in altered form: i.e. the convention now exists in reference to the specific demands for survival posed by the threatened extinction of the Armenian people, whereas earlier it served such traditional functions as celebrating heroism and affirming cultural identity. Nevertheless, "aliveness" by definition occurs in the present, and as the convention asserts, such a present culminates when all parties are present to one another in and through the experience of storytelling. Assuming the readerly role of

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who is telling the story, the storyteller can choose to distribute the apples to whomever they like. Amongst its variations, archivist Anne M. Avakian found that the "standard distribution" is the one where the apples are given in the following pattern: "one for the teller, one for the listener, and one for the one who gives heed/ear" (Avakian 95). Some storytellers distribute the three apples amongst the characters in the story they're telling. Others distribute the apples inequitably, with the listener receiving two apples. Still others give an apple to God. There are plenty of variations to choose from, but the beginning of the terminal formula always mentions three apples.

eavesdropper is therefore affectively to become a character in the story Marcom owns by virtue of her passionate remembering. In an interview with literary scholar Shushan Avagyan about the publication of her fourth novel, *The Mirror In the Well*, Marcom insists that "the books that I love, which I think of as masterpieces, have, in a manner, taught me as I read them to read them—books like *The Sound and the Fury*, or *The Street of Crocodiles*, or *The Rings of Saturn*—so perhaps in that way books cultivate readers, and books also, by the way, 'make' writers into the writers that they are. My books in some ways have made me as much as I have them" (Marcom, Interview by Shushan Avagyan). Elsewhere, Marcom elaborates upon the affinity she has for books that teach readers how to interact with them in terms of a principle both aesthetic and performative: that "books do allow for a deep connection: the consciousness of a reader with the text and story of the book—and that is amazing and radical and very particular to the mode of reading" (Davis-Van Atta 136). Marcom, in my view, is *not* referring to the way in which a narrative trains responsive readers for moral, ethical, or empathetic purposes. Rather, she is interested in the connection established when an author's way of writing becomes consonant with the reader's way of reading, such that a shared consciousness—not ideational or emotional training *per se*—becomes the primordial experience of connection within which various postmemorial effects occur and as various kinds of "knowledge."

In my chapter, I argue that the shared consciousness that Marcom forges between her writing and the reader's reading occurs in three vignettes—

"Mardiros," "The History of Bozmashen as Iterated by the Local Dogs," and "As To Where Are the Bootmakers and the Town of Kharphert"—that end with the "three apples" convention. In each of these vignettes, Marcom takes herself and her eavesdropper through a sequence of maneuvers. First, each vignette establishes an "archive" from different sources. I use "archive" here to include those collected source materials that unsatisfactorily describe some feature of the past the vignette eventually helps its eavesdropper passionately remember.[23] Second, the contrastive imagination transforms each of these slender archives such that they keep the traumatic past meaningfully alive in the present. Third, the operation of the contrastive imagination, by positing salutary "truths" immanent in the preserved feature of the trauma, produces postmemorial effects of ideational and affective import for the eavesdropper to live by. Though each vignette is created by making all three maneuvers, they complete each maneuver in a distinctive way. In "Mardiros," the archive is epic narrative, and it is transformed by an imaginative contrast between the ancient past and the genocidal present to obligate the eavesdropper to assume the role of rumor-mongerer in order to defeat a genocide bent on destroying stories. In this vignette, the formulaic narrative is rendered differently useful and adaptable, such that in its contemporary inspirational character it denies to the genocidal ambition—a strategy to exterminate a people by disabling their capacity to create

[23] Holocaust writing might not call this assemblage of fragments an "archive" because the physical archive of the Holocaust is staggering in its size and scope, but in the case of the Armenian Genocide and transatlantic slavery, the fragmentary assemblage as "archive" is par for the course.

self-affirming stories—its own chosen mode of endgame action. In "The History of Bozmashen as Iterated by the Local Dogs," the archive of a consular report and a folktale are transformed by ironic juxtaposition, the effect of which is to transform the despair of the eavesdropper's principled and aesthetic demoralization into an energizing, implacable anger that refuses "false" stories of genocide denial. In "As To Where Are the Bootmakers and the Town of Kharphert," the archive is an allegory, but one that serves a perverse purpose, that delivers its victims to their own worst natures rather than warns them of such a danger. By creating surprising continuities—between past and present, between Turkish and Nazi genocides—the contrastive imagination converts the allegorical into a parable. This parable warns the eavesdropper of two dangers: fear of one's own weakness, and the limitation of the historical understanding based on memory, the kind famously expressed by George Santayana. The parable instead extols postmemory's commitment to keeping trauma alive as a way to recognize the historicity of the present, and for purposes both self-reflexive and self-reflective. As the allegory-turned-parable affirms, and as the commitment to passionate remembering presumes, the past and present are mutually constitutive and this is the challenge addressed through a historical imagination functioning within postmemory and as postmemorial narrative. Taken together, the significant effects and affects of the three vignettes emerge from and occur on the narrative terrain where postmemory's ambitions to passionately remember are realized. For these reasons, I claim that Marcom's is an exemplary postmemorial narrative.

What happens after this Story, Mardiros?

I begin my analysis of *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* with the first chapter that uses the phrase the novel is named after. Marcom first narratively deploys the entirety of the Anatolian storytelling convention cited in the title of her novel—"And three apples fell from heaven, one for the storyteller, one for the listener, and one for the eavesdropper"—after almost a hundred pages (*Three Apples* 97). The convention ends a chapter called "Mardiros," a chapter which follows an Armenian man called Mardiros during his torture by Turkish soldiers, his abandonment in a pile of corpses, his "resurrection," his encounter with a pair of Armenian women on the way back to town, and his final verbal confrontation with the Turkish Commander at the army barracks. "Mardiros" is the first chapter of three in the novel to end with the traditional Anatolian "three apples fell from heaven" storytelling convention, so it announces the content also for the two subsequent storytelling chapters, each of which similarly conclude with the same recitation. In this first storytelling chapter, Marcom redeploys Armenian stories of martyrs and religious figures to contrast them with the genocide story she is telling. The temporal contrast between the ancient and genocide-time stories is significant.

It is useful to recognize Marcom's probable source material for "Mardiros" although it is comprised of any number of stories about tortured and murdered men in the memoirs and the histories. Based on Marcom's "Acknowledgements," some sources are more likely inspirations. She cites Henry H. Riggs's *Days of Tragedy in Armenia: Personal Experiences in Harpoot, 1915-*

1917, in which she likely read about the following event during the Armenian Genocide:

> When [the Armenian captives] were all seated, bound as they were, their guards with their rifles and bayonets, fell upon them and commenced a butchery that the imagination refuses to picture. So huge was the task of slaughter, that three or four men succeeded in escaping from the ravine while the gendarmes were busy with the horrid labor. These fugitives scattered and hid, but were pursued and hunted out by the relentless guards, who found and butchered them in their hiding places only one escaping, so far as known. This young man, whose name I dare not reveal as he is still living in Turkey, succeeded in evading his pursuers and hiding till nightfall. Then he started out to try to return to some place of safety but lost his way in the dark and wandered all night long, not knowing which way he was going. At last, as dawn began to break, he found his bearings again, and in the gray light, stole in to the American hospital and to safety. (Riggs 124)

The hallmarks of Mardiros's story can be found in this excerpt from an American Christian missionary who witnessed a bloodbath. Like the singular man at the end of Riggs's testimony, Mardiros in Marcom's novel manages to escape from the site of slaughter. Like this man, Mardiros also returns to the town. But the similarities stop here. In her chapter, Marcom imagines what Riggs called a scene "that the imagination refuses to picture" and appends her own narrative to that story. In the rest of my chapter, I explain how this source material is transformed by Marcom's application of a contrastive imagination such that it becomes the enabling feature of the trauma in the present.

Marcom begins "Mardiros" by ironically referencing the Armenian tradition of telling martyr stories. The first line of the chapter begins in *media res*, in the moment that the Turkish Commander "called him Mardiros while pissing on his face and buttocks" (Marcom, *Three Apples* 93). In this introduction to the

main character, the chapter's storyteller does not mention the man's real name in favor of telling the listener—eventually to become eavesdropper—how the man's torturers referred to him. The Commander calls the tortured man "Mardiros," an Armenian word often used to name males; in Armenian, "mardiros" means "martyr."[24] Using the Armenian word "mardiros" instead of its Turkish equivalent, "*şehit*," signals that the Commander had a particular nationality of martyr in mind, the *Armenian* martyr. The Commander knows that, in the diaspora, Armenians told and continue to tell stories about martyrs throughout their long history. Diaspora scholar Khachig Tölölyan has described Armenians' storytelling about martyrs as one "Of the elements which give that Armenian cultural tradition [of the diaspora] its cohesion and shape" ("Cultural Narrative" 222).[25] As part of "a ubiquitous cluster of stories," stories about martyrs are passed down by Armenians "at Church, in Sunday school, in kindergarten and elementary school" ("Cultural Narrative" 222, 222).[26] According to the

[24] The Armenian spelling for "martyr" is "մարտիրոս." The name comes from the Greek word for "witness."

[25] Armenian historian Sebouh D. Aslanian has also pointed to the Vartan story as foundational. He further explains: "Contrary to what one might initially think, this framing of Armenian history as social drama about the preservation of an endangered identity was not born with the Genocide of 1915, even if it was reinforced by the Catastrophe in powerful ways that still shape our popular conception of Armenian history today. Rather, this root paradigm of survival was probably first given shape to in one of the 'classics of Armenian literature,' Yeghishe Vardapet's *The History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, which chronicled the revolt of the Armenians and their church in the fifth century against the rule and religion of Sassanian Iran" (Aslanian 132).

[26] While Tölölyan's argument about the importance of stories in keeping Armenian culture alive was made in the context of Armenian terrorists and their pamphlets, Tölölyan's assertions ring true for Armenian culture more broadly. As the terrorists' pamphlets "reveal minds steeped in a recognizable Armenian

comparatist Leonardo Alishan, "The prime example of the Armenian in the context of martyrdom is the warrior-saint Vardan Mamikonian, and the prime event is the Battle of Avarayr" (Alishan 28). The martyr Vartan Mamigonian fought alongside "his 1036 martyrs [who] died on the battlefield of Avarayr in AD 451, fighting overpowering Persian troops sent out to force the Armenians to give up their Christian faith" (Björklund 342).[27] Armenians who hear the word "mardiros" immediately connect it to Vartan's refusal to renounce his Christianity against all odds at an epic battle where the Armenians were outnumbered almost 4 to 1 by the Persians. In calling the tortured man "Mardiros," the Commander ties the tortured man to the mythic nationalistic history Armenians told each other for more than a millennium. Stories of martyrs like Vartan have connected Armenians to each other through a shared sense of national pride, so it's telling that this "mardiros" is not a martyr like Vartan—he is not fighting to the death on a battlefield, he is being tortured in an army barracks. Recalling that *the Commander* labels the man "Mardiros," (he's not called a "mardiros" by his own supporters after he dies) reveals that the Commander's label is intended to verbally demean the Armenian man as part of his torture. Unlike Vartan who was called a martyr after his death and whose story was preserved for the sake of cultural solidarity, the Commander never

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idiom that has roots, not in a [then-] 68-year old genocide, but in 15 centuries of both learned and popular discourse, in ecclesiastical ritual and popular narrative, and, perhaps most importantly, in living song," so too are the minds of readers familiar with the centuries-long cultural traditions and stories of Armenian life ("Cultural Narrative" 221). See Khachig Tölölyan's article, "Cultural Narrative and the Motivation of the Terrorist" for details.

[27] See Nersoyan's "The Battle of Avarair" for details on the important event.

intends that Mardiros's story be preserved in song as Vartan's had (and has) been. In truth, the Commander assumes the power of naming in order—by tactical juxtaposition with Vartan—to deny his victim a story. The Commander thus perverts the function of the epic narrative for tactical ends. Eventually, I contend, the epic narrative is repurposed to defeat a crucial commitment of the genocidal will.

While the contrast between Vartan and Mardiros highlights Mardiros's deplorable inability to be preserved in story and song, a second contrast between Jesus and Mardiros invests the victim's existence with a substantiality that inspires remembrance. When Mardiros is brought back to life in the "Newresurrection," the sole question he asks of his "Newgod" is "What made you forget me, Effendi Bey?" (Marcom, *Three Apples* 94, 94). The two conjoined words, "Newresurrection" and "Newgod," tie the sixteen-century-long Armenian tradition of Christianity to Mardiros's present. The past is grammatically malleable: Christian tradition can be modified by the prefix "new." Mardiros's question also reveals a redeployment and modification of Christian stories, as his inquiry echoes Jesus's question to God of "Why have you forsaken me?" when he's suffering on the cross. Jesus's question reveals his concern with physical suffering, while Mardiros's shows a concern with being lost to memory. "Forsaken" has been replaced with "forgotten." The timing of Mardiros's question further reveals his concern with memory. Mardiros asks his question *after* his resurrection, while Jesus asks his during his crucifixion. "After" is more important than "during" for Mardiros. Immediately after Mardiros asks

his Newgod this question about memory, he "pondered and reviewed the lesson he knew the Newgod was teaching him until finally he came upon an answer: I must return to town" (94). Mardiros's return to the town he had once lived is a direct response to the question he asked of Newgod. Mardiros's actions while in town occur in the context of his concern about being forgotten, not merely forsaken as Jesus had been. The contrasts among the older stories of Vartan and Jesus, on the one hand, and the more recent story of Mardiros, on the other, establish that although Mardiros's expected and planned future is physical oblivion, his utmost concern is making sure he is not lost to memory.

In his encounter with the pair of Armenian women on his way back to town, Mardiros demands that he be remembered. Instead of the looping narrative chronicled in Riggs's testimony—about an escaped captive who had lost his way and found it in the morning when he successfully steals away to the safety of the hospital—Marcom imagines the escapee encountering others along the way. When Marcom's Mardiros meets a pair of women on the road, he urges them, who had been left with "only boys under eight years of age," to "Look at my bare chest and feet, touch and see me. I am a man above the age of eight" (95). Mardiros knows his uncanny presence post-resurrection can be a comfort to the women who thought they had been abandoned. He tries to quell their fears by making them affirm his presence. Though the women don't touch Mardiros as he asks them to, they "fell to their knees in joy and moved to wash and kiss Mardiros's feet" (95). The women want to show their gratitude and respect to Mardiros by washing his feet, a custom most commonly associated with Biblical

times and, particularly, with the story of Jesus whose feet were anointed by Lazarus's sister, Martha of Bethany, after Jesus had resurrected him.[28] Though the women "moved" to begin their biblically-resonant foot washing ceremony, they are so distracted by Mardiros's mutilated feet, they instead "created a newritual: They smoothed and patted the ground around the halo of his present and missing toes" (96). Instead of touching Mardiros's feet, the women create a new way to show their immense gratitude for being comforted because Mardiros's feet are oozing with pus. Though the women don't touch his body, the festering sores make way for a new mode of interaction. By calling their action a "newritual," the women express their investment in passionately remembering Mardiros through their ritualistic actions. With the newritual, Mardiros's sores are now a part of these women's lives. His experience will continue to live on in and through the repeated rituals of these two survivor women. In this instance, Mardiros successfully finds a place for his story to be passionately remembered through the personal embodiments of his existence in the two Armenian women's newritual, which emerges for them by the contrast between the existence of Mardiros and the story of Jesus. In this way, Mardiros successfully invents the context within which his story will survive in and for the future. Collectively inventing Mardiros's story with his disfigured form, the women invent the object, the idiom, and the sense of devotion to sustain passionate remembering, and all in response to an existential need to keep alive one of the few men over the age of eight. Founding a "newritual," they were able

[28] See John 12: 1-11.

to live "in joy" with the knowledge that their actions would keep Mardiros alive in their feelings and behaviors (95). The encounter between Mardiros and the two Armenian women reveals that within the intellectual and emotional place of postmemory, the culture-affirming stories of memory—such as Biblical ones or ones about the martyrs—can be redeployed to generate, by way of contrast, something more than an acknowledgment or assimilation of haunting events. This "more" is the content and internalization of a "living truth" that includes both the pain that was inflicted and the self-asserting narrative that appropriated the power to designate what is "meaningful" because it is efficaciously "pained."

With his story reanimated by the women's newritual, Mardiros enters the town without desiring revenge because he knows that his story continues to live on. Upon arriving at the army barracks where he had been tortured, Mardiros greets a guard: "I'm glad to be back. I still have several unanswered questions" (96). The men at the barracks were the ones who sliced away Mardiros's testicles, who plucked out his hair, who chopped off his toes. It might seem unusual that Mardiros would happily return to the place where such pain was inflicted on him, but this is *his* story now. Why shouldn't he express his longing for the place of his torture and for more information? It's now his right to remain civil. Yes, Mardiros's calm intimacy with the Commander and his cronies is, by the logic of victim and perpetrator, disconcerting. However, psychologically and narratively speaking, Mardiros is in control of what matters—his story, not his body parts. So the fascinating conversation with the Commander that follows begins from

Mardiros' position of confidence. What he wishes, to improve his decisive position, is an explanation.

Once he's in the Commander's office, instead of hurling himself at the Commander in a fit of rage, Mardiros "hunched down in front of" the Commander's chair and asks: "What happens after this Story?" (97). As he had told the guards at the entrance to the compound, he came to get his "unanswered questions" answered. Mardiros's first question is launched from an assumption about the meaning of his torture that he has already earned: there is an "after" to his story, that those living in the future will know what came before them. There is, after all, already a "newritual" in place. Further, by capitalizing "Story" in his question, Mardiros reveals how important he thinks his experience is for the future. He affirms his torture as a "Story," one that can be told by generations of Armenians after he's gone. There's an "after" to Mardiros's "Story" because he believes that the past has a place beyond the moment in which it was made. But the Commander's response is aggressive: "This story will never have happened after it's finished," as the Commander refuses to acknowledge the relevance of the past; in fact, he doesn't admit that a commendable past exists to be commemorated (though it most certainly did since it will be "finished" at some point) (97). He conveys his disdain for stories of the past by referring to Mardiros's "Story" as "story" in the lowercase. To the Commander, the past of the genocide is a "story," a malevolent fiction that shouldn't be recounted and instead must and should be forgotten. The Commander's response suggests that, if Mardiros wanted answers, he's come to the wrong place. Speaking from

confidence in his Story, Mardiros, we now realize, is more precisely seeking an explanation that will clarify the role of memory in perpetuating his Story—that is, what in my inquiry is designated as *postmemory*. The Commander's frank response about a "story" that never happened confesses his genocidal strategy, which is to ensure that once men like Mardiros are murdered, they will be, both in memory and in fact, dead and gone. What readers overhear, however, is that Mardiros, the tortured and dismembered man, has exacted a confession from the man who purportedly holds all the power. And this new archive of "confession" both informs and inspires the postmemorial Story of a post-genocide Mardiros who speaks to and for a future that includes his existence. In this way, Mardiros trumps what Marc Nichanian has called "the genocidal will."[29]

The conversation continues. The Commander elaborates on his genocidal strategy to erase all resources for memory in his response to Mardiros's following question. When Mardiros asks, "And the Rumors, where will they go?", the Commander responds, "With the marchers—the Mesopotamian has space enough for everything" (97). Ostensibly, to make sure that he heard the Commander correctly, but actually to push back against him, Mardiros tweaks the Commander's refusal of "Story" by using a different term—Rumor—one loaded with the idea of transmission. After all, rumors are *meant* to be told. They only exist in their retelling, often in secret. Rumors proliferate and grow through transmission. If Mardiros's story cannot be told in a situation of sanctioned storytelling, he wonders if the Commander would grant that it might be told in

[29] See Nichanian's *The Historiographic Perversion* for details.

secret. The Commander again refuses to engage Mardiros's rejoinder, but his response is revelatory nonetheless. He doesn't use Mardiros's key term, "Rumor." Instead, the Commander denies the rumors any existence. If rumors are to be sent to the Mesopotamian, a literal desert with few inhabitants and not much life, they are being sent to their deaths as so many Armenian women, elders, and children had been during the Armenian Genocide.[30] Without anyone alive to tell them, rumors will evaporate and pass into obscurity. By switching the issue at hand to transmission, rather than the fact that Mardiros already has a story in limited circulation, the Commander appears to have regained his power. In fact, toward the end of their conversation, it seems the Commander has denied Mardiros a voice to tell his story because when Mardiros realizes that "You've thought of everything, sir," the Commander retorts, "Yes. We thought of you also" (97, 97). The scene of confrontation ends there. The Commander gets the final word, and we presume that Mardiros is killed. Yet we do not see his murder, and this is important. For its representation does not in fact end the issue now at stake in the conversation: how can the transmission of Mardiros' story occur if, as the Commander intends, memory dies in the silent vastness of

[30] For more information, see Fuat Dündar's "Pouring a People into the Desert: The 'Definitive Solution' of the Unionists to the Armenian Question" in the edited collection *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Katharine Derderian's "Common Fate, Different Experience: Gender-Specific Aspects of the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917," Vahakn N. Dadrian's chapter "The Implementation of the Genocide" in his book *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, and Raymond Kévorkian's chapter "Displaced Populations and the Main Deportation Routes" in his book *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History*.

the desert? If Mardiros's story is not allowed to circulate, Mardiros's past is not allowed a future.

Marcom ends the episode with an answer to this question, a solution to this predicament. In the first manuscript version of the novel that Marcom submitted in partial fulfillment for her Master of Fine Arts degree at Mills College in 1999, the chapter ends without the "three apples" convention (Marcom, "The Myth of Genocide" 137). However, in the version published in the novel, Marcom ends the chapter with the traditional Armenian storytelling convention: "And three apples fell from heaven, one for the storyteller, one for the listener, and one for the eavesdropper" (Marcom, *Three Apples* 97). This ending signifies the endurance of ancient narrative, which occupies the place of the "last word" here while also serving as the first words of rumor, the transmission of the Mardiros story by the uninvited outside world, those whom the perpetrators want to keep benighted, the eavesdroppers. If an unnamed storyteller—we don't know Mardiros's actual name—tells his story to a diabolically hostile listener—the Commander and everything sinister he represents—the reader is the eavesdropper, the consciousness contacted through a newly animated old narrative gesture that invites her participation in a narrativized future, a good rumor-mongering intended to break the genocidal will by denying its power to exterminate stories. The "three apples" ending is transformed from the formulaic into the inspirational, as it morphs from the words of a remembered past into an invocation to fulfill an obligation to spread the word. In this particular instance, that means contrasting the epic sacrifice of

the martyred hero Mardiros to the denigration of an ordinary Armenian man who becomes a "mardiros" because the narrative ennoblement of his brutalization sustains rumor, the very path to revelation and survival his torturers fear the most. The slenderest of archives—the nineteen words of a storytelling convention—possess defiantly generative power, when repurposed through the contrastive imagination, to define the genocidal present and the willful future it was meant to exterminate. Passionate remembering so construed makes it possible to resist genocide *after its occurrence*, and this is the enabling "truth" carried by the eavesdropper who assumes his role to pass on the word, to harbor a somber and resisting faith in ancestral narrative to encompass ancestral trauma.

Tell me, Isquhee, what stories have you been telling?

As "Mardiros" ends, so does Marcom's second storytelling vignette, "The History of Bozmashen as Iterated by the Local Dogs"; both vignettes end with the same "three apples fell from heaven" storytelling convention. The similarities don't end with their twinned final lines. Building on the enabling truth and invocation to narrative promoted in "Mardiros," "The History of Bozmashen as Iterated by the Local Dogs" takes up the redeployment of folktales. The emphasis in the highlighted folktale is upon unfulfilled desire. Within the operation of a contrastive imagination, however, the didactically communitarian functions of the folktale are transformed to serve an affective purpose, to connect the emotional experience of genocide victims and the eavesdropper's experience of

the appalling. In the end, postmemory generates a new archive—one that juxtaposes a folktale and a consul's trivializing document of mass murder—to reveal the emotion of despair and then to transform it into a multigenerational anger that energizes contestation.

The vignette's plot is convoluted and curiously inspired by survivor testimony. In "The History of Bozmashen as Iterated by the Local Dogs," an Armenian shepherd boy named Isquhee talks with his two dogs about his ideal wife, spends a night discussing stories with his mother, awakens as a transformed dog, survives the total destruction of his town of Bozmashen, and laps up his cousin Kurken's blood after Kurken is murdered by a sickle-wielding policeman. At the end of the chapter, readers reencounter the terminal storytelling convention: "And three apples fell from heaven: one for the storyteller, one for the listener, and one for the eavesdropper" (145). As with "Mardiros," this chapter is likely inspired by stories Marcom read in the testimonies she cites in her "Acknowledgements." In Consul Leslie Davis's accounts of the genocide in Central Anatolia, he recounts a time when he and an Armenian acquaintance, Krikor Maghakian, rode to Krikor's native village of Bozmashen and "found it in ruins" with "a man digging near a spring under a clump of trees just off the road" outside the town (Davis 78). Consul Davis explains that the man was "a gendarme digging two shallow graves in the sand" for the two corpses lying at his feet (78). With a quick mention that he had "frequently rode past this spot since and seen the skulls of these women lying on the sand," Consul Davis moves on to describe the ruined houses and a "few

hungry looking cats [that] were prowling around" in what was left of the town completely depleted of its Armenian residents (78). Consul Davis's Bozmashen leaves much to the imagination.

Marcom accepts the challenge to imagine Consul Davis's destroyed town by redeploying both the style and plot of traditional Armenian folktales.[31] These folkloric features often include fantastic plot inconsistencies, and Marcom maintains the tradition. For example, it's not obvious that Isquhee turned into a dog overnight. In the morning when Isquhee wakes up, there are three dogs instead of the two that were described as Isquhee's companions. And in the last two pages of the chapter, Isquhee's name is omitted until the very end, when he's described as drinking his cousin's blood along with the other dogs. These kinds of inconsistencies are typical of tales of transformation, which leads me to interpret Isquhee's transformation as one bearing strong similarities to Armenian folktales of transformation. According to philologist and folklorist Alvard Jivanyan, Armenian folktales have many instances of human-to-animal shape-shifting. Jivanyan explains that Armenian tales of female children "[w]earing habits made of animal furs, skins or plants" can be interpreted as the character "renouncing also one's own kind and even hints at a partial shape-shifting" (Jivanyan 94). In these tales, the "heroine chooses to show herself as a beast, a

[31] I'm supported in my reading here with the interesting cultural phenomenon of Armenians in the current diaspora being better versed in the ancient tales than they are in contemporary ones. As Khachig Tölölyan has explained, "Anglophone ethnics ironically know more of the older literature originally written overseas and in Armenian than of the work written in Armenian in America by their own grandparents" ("Armenian-American Literature" 27).

non-human" because "[w]here a human is under threat coming from his likes, an animal or a plant can survive" (Jivanyan 94).[32] Isquhee's transformation makes sense by Jivanyan's explanation when taking into account the time period that is the setting of the chapter, the time of the Armenian Genocide in Central Anatolia. With a particularly Armenian name that means "truthful," Isquhee is marked as an Armenian during a time when it was increasingly dangerous to be one.[33] He's also oddly marked with a female name though he is described as a "shepherd boy" by Marcom from the beginning of the chapter (Marcom, *Three Apples* 141). It's the oddness of Isquhee's female Armenian name that suggests Isquhee's transformation is inspired in part by Armenian folktales. As mentioned in my summary of Jivanyan's position above, shape-shifters in Armenian folktales were often young females who avoided violence by transforming into or hiding under the guise of an animal. Though Isquhee isn't described as a female in the chapter, his name marks him as such. And though readers don't see Isquhee directly threatened by any aggressors in the chapter, they do see what happens to Armenians when Kurken meets a "Turkish or Kurdish farmer who was or was not a policeman" as he searches for his destroyed town of Bozmashen: "the

[32] See Alvard Jivanyan's article, "The Neutralization of Tropes in Armenian Fairy Tale Narratives," for detailed explanations of the connections between tropes and their enlivened variants.

[33] In Armenian, the name Isquhee (Իսկուհի) is a female name because it ends with the suffix "ուհի" ("oo-hee") that makes male names into female ones. It comes from the Armenian word "իսկական" ("ees-ka-gan"), which means "true" or "real." See the entry for "իսկուհի" in Hratchyah Ajarian's *Armenian Names Dictionary* (Հրաչեայ Աճառեանի «Հայոց Անձնանունների Բառարան»).

policeman in farmer's clothing swiped Kurken's head cleanly off" (145, 145).[34] The threat of violence is real, and Isquhee's transformation into a dog allows him to escape the fate of so many Armenians like Kurken. As a dog, Isquhee hides out in plain sight; his name isn't mentioned again until the very end of the chapter when it becomes safe again to say it. If readers interpret Isquhee's transformation in this way, they would be reminded of shape-shifting's positive potential to preserve and protect, just as it did in the Armenian folktales.

However, though Marcom deploys the Armenian folktale's conceit of shape-shifting, her chapter undermines the view of Isquhee's transformation as a successful evasion by virtue of its canine connotations. Throughout survivor memoirs and eyewitness accounts of the genocide, dogs are consistently depicted as voracious consumers of human flesh.[35] The image of dogs eating corpses has become so commonplace that Swedish filmmakers Peå Holmquist and Suzanne Khardalian simply titled their 2005 documentary about the reminiscences of an elderly genocide survivor living in France *I Hate Dogs!*.[36] In the context of the

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[34] Marcom uses the traditional Anatolian opening convention for fairy tales, "there was and was not," in her description of the Turkish or Kurdish farmer. I'm not sure what to make of this observation besides note it here, but there could be something to this reference...

[35] For descriptions of the man-eating dogs, see, for example, Leyla Neyzi and Hranush Kharatyan-Araqelyan's *Speaking to One Another: Personal Memories of the Past in Armenia and Turkey* (especially pages 84, 137-139) and Miller & Miller's *Survivors* (especially page 23).

[36] A filmmaker from France, Serge Avedikian, made a cartoon about the 1910 removal of over 30,000 dogs from Constantinople. His film, called *Chienne d'histoire*, won the Short Film Palme d'Or in 2010. Critics, namely Myrna Douzjian, have argued that the film allegorically tells the story of the Armenian Genocide by making literal one of its main stories about the dehumanization of Armenians by the Ottoman administration.

story, though Isquhee escapes genocidal violence by turning into an animal, he turns into the symbol of genocidal destruction as it is frequently employed by today's Armenians living in the diaspora.[37]

Isquhee's transformation into a dog becomes even more sinister when seen in the context of the dehumanizing rhetoric used by the Ottoman perpetrators against their Armenian victims. It is as if Isquhee becomes what the Ottomans envisioned as his degraded destiny. Armenians were "dogs" and "*gâvurs*" ("infidels" in Turkish) to their Turkish oppressors. Numerous survivor memoirs documented scenes of Armenians dehumanized with the label of "dog." Grigoris Balakian, in his survivor testimony of *Armenian Golgotha,* recounts when he overheard a Turkish gendarme say to his peers, "Don't bring bread or water to these dogs. Let them starve so they will understand what it means to rebel" (131). In David Kherdian's recounting of his grandmother's experience of surviving the Armenian Genocide in *The Road from Home*, Turkish villagers taunted Armenians with the paired slur of "infidel dog" (60). The Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, Massachusetts even has "a 'dog collar' that was worn by a victim of the Armenian Genocide in 1915" amongst its collections of Armenian cultural artifacts ("AMA Museum Collections"). Inspired by the diaspora's stories of this terrible slur, Marcom has many scenes in *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* where Armenians are called dogs. One Turkish gendarme who revels in torturing Armenians imagines how "[t]he dogs cry:

[37] Dogs are a symbol in writing about the Armenian Genocide writ large, as in the title of Peter Balakian's memoir, *Black Dog of Fate: An American Son Uncovers His Armenian Past*.

Dear God Sir Please Have Pity for Me, Son of God, Please" (Marcom, *Three Apples* 176). Another indignantly exclaims that he "dislike[s] waiting one minute for a dog" as he rounds up Armenian men to be jailed (160). These scenes, inspired by reminiscences of survivors, employ an iconic idiom to characterize genocide perpetrators as much by their mode of comprehension as by their homicidal intent.[38] So what are we to make of the irony that the dehumanization that defined and justified violence ends by saving Isquhee *from* that violence? Put in terms of the imagination: what purpose is served by using the contrastive imagination in related fashion for ironic juxtaposition?

In my view, Marcom is juxtaposing the consul's feeble document and the folktale of transformation to create an internally conflicted archive. In this archive, the commonplace canine usage is employed to make a mockery of salvation—secular and religious—because the saving grace of shape-shifting only visits degradation upon Isquhee, and in a manner that saves biological life but not his *lived* life. Though Isquhee is "saved" from being killed, he's not saved for what he was most concerned about. Isquhee is introduced in his vignette just as he's discussing his "future wife" (143). He dreams about her "extra sweety" breath and her "breasts and thighs" (141, 143). The only goal he discusses in the

[38] This sort of dehumanizing rhetoric has been discussed by Bolinger and Hirsch & Smith using the example of Jews who were demonized during the Holocaust. Bolinger argues that nouns have a particularly strong effect because, "When speakers really want to be insulting, they produce disparaging nouns, not disparaging adjectives" (Bolinger 79). Hirsch & Smith posits that subjugated populations in genocidal conditions "will be called vermin, infidels, traitors, heretics, enemies of the people. […] Such terms prepare the victims for destruction by dehumanizing members of the group and providing a warrant for genocide" (Hirsch & Smith 388).

chapter is marriage. By turning into a dog and escaping his murder, Isquhee is no longer able to realize his singular goal of marrying. His physical salvation ruins his chances of finding domestic bliss. If Isquhee's desire to marry the ideal woman is forever denied, he assumes he might be given a magical capability in consolation. He assumes he could "lick at the fountain of [his cousin Kurken's] blood rushing from his neck" just like the magical, dog-shaped creatures called արալեզ or հարալեզ ("aralez" or "haralez") from Armenian folktale who could lick the dead back to life (145).[39] Isquhee is denied this magical ability to revive the dead as he's denied the marriage he wanted when he is saved by being transformed into a dog. Isquhee's exclusion from his own life as the outcome of being "saved" from the mass murdering is more than dismaying; it is grounds for existential despair. Remembering that Marcom's inspiration for the vignette is likely Consul Davis's report, the juxtaposition of Isquhee's despairing situation with the consul's frustratingly slender portrayal of the town's destruction and the decimation of its population is also more than dismaying; it's a provocation. The emptiness that *is* the Consul's report, and doesn't just afflict its content, is almost metaphysically empty for it speaks of a deed, an outcome, and a point of

[39] The pronunciations of արալեզ and հարալեզ are "ah-rah-lehz" and "hah-rah-lehz." In the story of Ara the Fair, a Babylonian queen, Shamiram, heard of Ara's beauty and longed for him to be her lover. When Ara resisted her advances, Shamiram sent her troops to battle Ara's and capture him for her purposes. Ara is fatally wounded, but Shamiram sends mythical hounds to lick him back to life. The majority of tales about Ara recount the success of this rejuvinating licking. For more information about "aralez" or "haralez," see the epic of "Ara the Fair and Shamiram" in Agop Jack Hacikyan, Gabriel Basmajian, Edward S. Franchuk, and Nourhan Ouzounian's *The Heritage of Armenian Literature: From the Oral Tradition to the Golden Age* (pages 37-38, specifically).

view without salvational promise. It is thus not the violence which the eavesdropper shares with the victims; it is the despair of an existence in which redemption is unavailable and, given the inevitably degrading dog image, unspeakable.

What, then, can be productively expressed in the aftermath of eavesdropping on this episode? The answer, I think, can be found by noticing the extent to which the eavesdropper's folkloric expectations—her birthright idiom—are violated and how these violations engender a narrative anger that connects the eavesdropper to the anger of the denied victim. Though Marcom doesn't represent this, Isquhee should justifiably feel anger at the opportunities denied him by his escape. What's the point of being saved if nothing like life can be lived after it? Eavesdroppers of Isquhee's story feel anger, too, when they hear the storytelling convention at the end of the vignette without the marriage they were led to expect at the beginning of it. Their narrative expectations are further denied because Isquhee as an ostensibly magical dog cannot save his cousin Kurken by licking his blood, like the magical dogs of folktales. In both Isquhee and the eavesdropper, "anger" at the violation of unfulfilled expectations becomes anger at "violation" in all its grievous connotations. These alignments between fictional character and eavesdropper differ from other emotions felt by audiences of other stories. Ancient Greek tragedy supposedly produces pity and fear. The "tragedy" in the archive of folktale and consular report produces despair and anger, but in sequence—like causal historical narrative itself—wherein resigned despair becomes implacable anger about stories not told so

that false stories can be uttered in their place. Admittedly, most forms of sustained anger are self-defeating. The persistent anger at genocide-denying stories, however, meets the requirements of self-affirmation and historical consciousness. And it does so because, in the Armenian diaspora, the living perpetrator is the denier, with whom there can be no willingness "to agree to disagree."

Blumpty blumpty

The affective truths of despair-turned-anger in the preceding vignette now are expanded to historical truths in "As To Where Are the Bootmakers and the Town of Kharphert." While a consul's report and folktales were juxtaposed in the former, in the present vignette, the contrast between the said and the unspeakable reveals the answers to two ambitions for historical inquiry: (1) Why did Turkish citizens buy into the genocidal program against their neighbors? and, (2) How was the Armenian Genocide a prequel to the Nazi Holocaust? The contrastive imagination is used to establish a connection between the psychology that addresses the first question and the ideology that addresses the second. And the outcome differs from theses arguing that genocidal urges emerge from fear of "the other." The archive that undergoes postmemorial transformation in this vignette is an extended metaphor—an *allegory*—that presents its eavesdroppers with their own worst natures instead of warning them of that danger. Through the operation of a contrastive imagination that establishes the past and the present as mutually constitutive, the allegory is transformed into an instructive

parable—an analogy that prompts critical thinking—which compels its eavesdroppers to acknowledge that they are embedded in an historical moment still very much co-present with the traumatic past.

The complex plot of "As To Where Are the Bootmakers and the Town of Kharphert" requires summary. The vignette is an allegory about a troupe of traveling bootmakers who bring frenzied destruction to a small Anatolian town. At the beginning of the vignette, these bootmakers arrive in the small, mostly Armenian town of Kharphert to make and sell handmade leather boots. The townspeople pine for the chic pointy shoes shaped like "scythes" and spend all of their money acquiring them, such that when their money is all spent, they begin trading unconventional items for a pair (180). Though the bootmakers are initially willing to trade for household goods (hand-knitted shawls, embroidered silk pillows, and the like), the trading quickly becomes exploitative, as "family books, scraps of poetry, hoes, oxen, sheep, young daughters, chimneys, brick walls, tonnirs, and land titles" are bartered for boots (181-182). Nevertheless, the bootmakers' craft is so popular in Kharphert that the entire town is demolished to make room for the bootmakers' workshops and for their payment offices. In the remnants of the town, the bootmakers issue an edict to keep track of complicated new methods of payment, which include all manner of body parts. After having drained the townspeople of everything in the town (both material and familial), the bootmakers pack up and move to Munich, taking on "an ambitious street artist who quickly rose to the position of General Manager" (184). At the end of this vignette, the bootmakers destroy Kharphert and move on

to terrorize Germany and eventually much of Europe during World War II under the management of Adolf Hitler. As an allegory for the way that an entire population "buys in" to committing genocide against their neighbors, the vignette makes provocative comparisons between Anatolia and Germany in their darkest times.

Though the allusions to Nazis and Hitler suggest otherwise, Marcom's chapter likely emerged out of a particular archival document of the Armenian Genocide. I read the bootmakers' edict (to be discussed in further detail below) as being inspired by the Official Proclamation of the Ottoman Empire that Marcom reprints elsewhere in her novel. In a chapter called "Official Proclamation," Marcom reproduces a source she found in the appendix to Consul Leslie Davis's chronicle of the Armenian genocide in the Kharphert and Mezre region, *The Slaughterhouse Province*. In Marcom's novel, the document dated June 26, 1915, mandates "a literal obedience to the following orders, in a categorical manner" and goes on to order that Armenians ready themselves for a temporary relocation by entrusting their goods to the government for safekeeping; that they take comfort in knowing their route through the Mesopotamian will be comfortable because shelters have been prepared for them; and that they leave weapons behind because they will be protected by soldiers and gendarmes (126).[40] "To assure their comfort during the journey, hans and suitable buildings have been prepared, and everything has been done for

[40] In Marcom's novel, the source is dated June 26, 1915. In Consul Davis's book, the source is dated June 25, 1915.

their safe arrival at their places of temporary residence, without their being subjected to any kind of attack or affronts," the governing bodies insist (127). The nine other rules to be followed continue in much the same way. In sum, the form and tone of the Official Proclamation as reproduced in Consul Davis's book and as reprinted in Marcom's novel are decidedly bureaucratic, with the actor of the sentence obscured in passive sentence constructions. Legalese dominates in all ten of the rules to be followed in the proclamation, and Marcom took note of this aspect when she transformed the document in her vignette.

Transforming the document into the bootmakers' edict of the vignette mimics the source material's legalese, a mode of discourse that makes ideology more visible. In this case, the document establishes the legalities, norms, and practices of civilization in a manner that destroys the sense of connection that "being civilized" presupposes. The bootmakers declare:

> AS of today, July 5, blumpty blumpty, plucked out nails (in their entirety, please, no slivers or scraps), pulled-out hairs (bulbous roots also intact, please, this is a business), hands, fingers (allowable but of lesser value), feet (toes ineligible), fully intact soles, noses, breasts, testicles (with penis, an added pair), secondary internal organs (minus the spleen, which can be given no exchange value), eyeballs (intact with blue given a slightly higher value), and all water sources will be accepted as official currency. Currency rates will change daily dependent on availability and circulation. Look for the signs in the Currency At A Glance in the north wing of the marketplace. (183)

The bootmakers want blood in exchange for their boots. Almost all of the items the bootmakers list in their new rules of exchange are body parts that are typically extracted in torture: the nails they want are "plucked out," the hairs they desire are "pulled-out" (183). In one sense, the bootmakers' operation is an

allegory of the Ottoman Empire's orchestration of genocide under the auspices of temporary exile. The last item of the bootmakers' list, the only one that is not a body part, "all water sources," further supports this view (183). As oral historians Donald E. and Lorna Touryan Miller remind us in their decades of work collecting Armenian survivor stories, during the Armenian Genocide, the men were often outright murdered, but the women and children were sent on "deportations [which] were highly organized so that only a fraction of those who began the marches completed their journey. The rest died of thirst, hunger, disease" (Miller & Miller, "Armenian Survivors" 55). In other texts, survivors told stories about Turkish gendarmes who refused water to the deportees, even when the Euphrates was in sight and the beggars were green-black with dehydration.[41] These civilization-ending practices are obscured in both the fictional edict and the historical Official Proclamation in language that affirms the legalities which uphold civilization. The bootmakers assert their business acumen with parenthetical comments in passive voice. They won't accept partial or halfhearted efforts at payment. Certain body parts are "ineligible" while others are "allowable but of lesser value" (Marcom, *Three Apples* 183). They assure the townspeople that they are not running an amateur operation, but a verified "business" with clear terms and conditions for the exchange of boots. The Proclamation likewise assures its listeners that everything is under control, that the terms of the relocation are clear. Both edict and Proclamation use the

[41] For information about the dehydration of exiles, see Rouben Paul Adalian's excellent entry "The Armenian Genocide" in *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*.

norms of governance and business to call for the methodical destruction of civilization.

And yet, what is the source of the bootmakers' conviction that its audience will agree to the arrangement? This is the point where the allegorical edict starkly differs from its historical source document. The difference inheres in the realm of the symbolic. If body parts are being exchanged for boots, what do the boots symbolize in the allegory? What were the Ottoman Turks and Kurds promised in exchange for killing their own neighbors? Why did they buy in to the deal?

These questions about the terms of the allegorical edict can be answered by focusing on the comical "blumpty blumpty"—its "hear ye hear ye"—that announces the advent of the proclamation. In my view, the nonsense throat-clearing contrasts what is *said* with what is *unsayable*. Yes, "blumpty blumpty" is the sound of the town crier clearing his throat to ensure that the villagers are listening. But the confidence of these words bespeak *that* the villagers will listen and obey—that nonsense will gain attention and motivate action—and enables the vocalization itself. And, therefore, possesses actual semantic content. The symbolism of boots reveals the content and thereby answers the first historical question: Why did the villagers buy into the bootmakers' scheme? Why did nativists murder their neighbors? The boots are "beatific" to the villagers who see them as necessary for their blissful happiness (183). Essentially, they elevate the boots to the status of life-affirming object. The edict ratifies this belief: in hearing that they could make exchanges to gain more of the "beatific" object, the

listeners of the edict are ennobled. They think themselves important enough to be given the opportunity by the bootmakers to own even more of their "beatific" goods. This feeling is key because it suggests that the boots *improved* the villagers' psychological state. If they became blissfully happy as a result of obtaining the boots, they must have been less happy before. I argue that the source of the villagers' sense of insufficiency without the boots explains why they agreed to exchange life and civilization for the beatific objects. The bootmakers know that the villagers are afflicted by the insufficiency of their individual and collective lives. Any disciplinary, take-charge program that includes them also, by implication, honors them. So the opportunity for the villagers to assent offers enhanced stature and organizes practical and emotional commitments. "Blumpty blumpty" both announces and concludes the message, for to grant that it has semantic content is to perform the intention and act to get with the program. Nativists killed their neighbors from fear of *their own selves* being insufficient, as needing a method and purpose from elsewhere to cherish their own lives.[42] This is the unspeakable truth that answers the first question.

[42] Historical and sociological examinations of the period of Nazi collaboration by millions of ordinary Germans against their Jewish and Roma neighbors supports my argument that collaboration was viewed as a "deal" that promised the survival and success of those who agreed to the terms. Michael Burleigh argues that ordinary Germans who tacitly supported the Nazi regime were "bathed in narcissistic ethno-sentimentality, enjoying a brief improvement in their standard of living and vistas of national greatness" (812). For Burleigh, the rise of Nazism by the support of ordinary Germans was a "dystopian 'quick fix' to Germany's manifold problems ultimately resulted in the deaths of some fifty million people" (1). Similarly, William Brustein offers an "interest-based" hypothesis for the rise of Nazism. He argues that "According to the theory of interest-based affiliation, the act of joining a party (especially an extremist party) is a two-stage

Now the second question: How are events in Germany and Anatolia connected? The answer to this question emerges from the transformation of the allegory into a parable during the vignette. Having overheard a critical insight gained from contrasting the voiced portions of the edict with the confidence beneath the nonsense "unsaid," the eavesdropper is positioned for an historical extrapolation which rests upon the perpetrator psychology of insufficiency, the desire for someone or something outside the self to provide substance, worth, worthiness. This desire occurs not only in the past histories of Turkish and German nationalism; it is in all aspects of human existence in history. This desire constitutes that aspect of historicity that defines the "fearful" in present consciousness. This realization is different than the historical understanding of George Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Santayana's piece of wisdom comes from memory exercised in the interests of historical understanding; parables of the danger of forgetting its advice abound. But the parable of the "blumpty blumpty" scheme of the bootmakers communicates the wisdom from postmemory as enabled by the historical imagination: self-reflexive and self-reflective critical thinking emerge from the acknowledgment that the present is inflected by the transformation of the past into the *ever-present past*. And this transformation, this keeping trauma alive, is the way we reveal our historical selves to our living selves for moral and humane purposes. These purposes underlie civilization.

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process. Correlation of interests between individuals and party programs constitutes the first stage; the second stage consists of response to incentives or disincentives for joining" (178).

GOING HOME: SENTIMENTAL POSTMEMORY AND DIASPORIC RETURN IN *THE DAYDREAMING BOY*

After the success of *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, Micheline Aharonian Marcom set her sights on a different postmemorial experience, that of a fictional Armenian boy orphaned by the Armenian Genocide who ends up in Beirut. As she had done with *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, Marcom began to research the time period she chose as the setting for her book. With her first novel, Marcom worked from a number of survivor memoirs and her family's own personal stories of the genocide to create a polyphonic novel. In her second, 2004's *The Daydreaming Boy*, Marcom noticed she had much less published work to sift through. In exasperation she admitted in interviews that "there's nothing written on these orphans. There's nothing. On orphans in general, there's so little it's unbelievable. I was sort of mining these first person accounts to write this first book and here, I found two things" (Marcom, Interview with Michael Silverblatt on *The Daydreaming Boy*).[43] As she had in *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, Marcom would have to take the source material she was given through the usual channels

[43] Marcom's two "things" here are Andranik Zaroukian's memoir, *Men without Childhood* about life as an orphan after the Armenian Genocide and James L. Barton's chronicle of a humanitarian organization that helped Armenian orphans, *Story of Near East Relief (1915–1930): An Interpretation*. Marcom includes Barton's description of an orphan who had been Turkified in one of her chapters. Marcom scholar Shushan Avagyan also disclosed in a personal communication: "Marcom acknowledged that she had made use of Zaroukian's book in an email to me. This is also clear from the descriptions of the orphanage, the rules and the punishments. For example, adopting the words 'mairigs' and 'hairig,' which Zaroukian uses to describe the wardens and the director of the orphanage. The passages with the sea and the walks on the Corniche are also inspired from Zaroukian's book. Finally, many of the experiences that Vostanig has at the orphanage are nearly identical with those of Boghos in Zaroukian's book" (Shushan Avagyan, personal communication, 22 July 2015).

of memory (in this case, the two paltry "things" of the Armenian orphan archive) and turn them into a novel. In my chapter on Marcom's second novel, instead of analyzing the way that Marcom transforms the source material she was working with such that she is able to passionately remember the past in the present—a method I used in my chapter on *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*—I analyze how the singular protagonist of Marcom's second novel does so himself with his own set of memorial source materials. The novel's focus on a single consciousness, Vahé's, is a departure from Marcom's previous focus on multiple characters in *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*. Because of this shift in focus from plural to singular storytelling, I analyze Vahé's attempt to imaginatively transform a fragmentary archive in order to productively keep a feature of the trauma alive. His ambition for existential plentitude is indeed impelled by the sense of frustration which I have posited as an informing psychic condition of postmemory. However, Vahé attempts to transform his slender archive by employing a "sentimental imagination" whose operation cannot produce life-enriching effects and affects.

The novel makes its points about postmemory by telling the story of a single fictional orphan of the Armenian Genocide, Vahé Tcheubjian. Vahé, a 47-year-old carpenter during the 1964-1965 setting of the novel, grew up in Beirut's Bird's Nest Orphanage during the 1920s without ever knowing who his parents were, nor how he was orphaned, nor why he spoke only Turkish when he arrived at the orphanage, nor how he managed to survive the genocide that likely claimed at least one of his parents as victims. With constant shifts in time and setting, the novel follows Vahé through reminiscences of his education and

disciplining at the Armenian orphanage; his strained relationship with his wife, Juliana; his archival hunt for personal connections to the past of the Armenian Genocide; his denial of Vostanig, an abused and tormented fellow orphan from the Bird's Nest Orphanage; his fantasies about and eventual rape of Béatrice, a Palestinian maid who lives in the same building as Vahé; his imagined scenes of his unnamed and unknown mother; and his eventual murder at the hands of militants during the Lebanese Civil War in 1986. Because of Marcom's sustained focus on the character of Vahé and his thoughts and experiences, I see *The Daydreaming Boy* as Marcom's reflection upon the character of Vahé's imagination, particularly its unsuitability for producing the kinds of affective and intellectual contents successive generations need to internalize as passionate remembering.

I begin by focusing on Vahé's education at the orphanage. Emphasizing how Vahé receives and perceives the memories of the Armenian Genocide that are passed down to him at the orphanage, I describe how Vahé is afflicted by feelings of belatedness, loss, and lack of personal connection to the genocide, which colonizes his imagination. As a result, Vahé's diasporic experience is one in which he is distanced from, what he takes to be, a lost self. For Vahé, expressions of emotion are impossible because his emotions don't have recourse to a recognizable self. Sadly, Vahé projects his raw emotional urges onto his source materials. Such projection is not transformation, and so Vahé does not passionately remember as an existential investment in his present life; rather, he revisits versions of the trauma upon himself and others, finally repeating its

deadly outcome. Vahé's desire to "return home" becomes nothing more than his drive to repeat, as an individual, the genocidal victimization. The big "truth" of the unfulfilled postmemorial experience depicted in the novel is one that Vahé misunderstands. He tragically never realizes that the "home" of diaspora is the non-idealized past enlivened in the different time and place of the present.

Thus far, *The Daydreaming Boy* has not been discussed in the context of the postmemory phenomenon. In the only academic journal article on the novel, the approach is largely Foucauldian in focus. That article, "(Un)Disciplining Traumatic Memory: Mission Orphanages and the Afterlife of Genocide in Micheline Aharonian Marcom's *The Daydreaming Boy*" by Rebecca Saunders and Shushan Avagyan, appeared in *Contemporary Women's Writing* in 2010 alongside articles on Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro.[44] Saunders and Avagyan explain that Marcom's novel reveals "the ways in which mission orphanages attempted to 'discipline' trauma," ultimately arguing "that Marcom's narrative demonstrates that the disciplinary space of the orphanage succeeded less in 'curing' subjects from trauma than in repressing traumatic symptoms, that the regulatory practices of the orphanages not only were unable to efface traumatic memory by discipline but also often retraumatized the children in their charge" (200). Marcom's novel about Vahé's experience offers Saunders and Avagyan the opportunity to add the orphanage to Foucault's list of disciplinary spaces (along with the school, the prison, the hospital, the barracks) that simultaneously create

[44] It's interesting to note that Marcom's second novel is the only one, as of the writing of my dissertation, to be analyzed in an academic journal article.

subjects who are "disciplined on the surface while bearing another unruly self they strive ceaselessly to discard or disguise" (205). They call Marcom's work a novel of "traumatized realism" and argue that we need to combine trauma studies with a critique of modernity to understand it (217). While Saunders and Avagyan share my interest in Marcom's novel as one that "explores the painfully intimate, quotidian, and often obscure aftereffects of the genocide in the lives of survivors and their descendants," we focus our attentions on different causes for the aftereffects (199). Saunders and Avagyan are concerned with revealing the dominating force of the orphanage as a place that retraumatized the orphans through harsh discipline, creating subjects who could at times "have been able to function 'normally' in society but who remained haunted by traumatic memories, incomprehensible impulses, and an unspeakable self" (217). I, too, identify the orphanage as one of the sources of Vahé's problems, but not in the way that Saunders and Avagyan see it. Instead of seeing the depravations of speaking about the Armenian Genocide at the orphanage as leading to Vahé's turmoil, I will focus on how the orphanage administrators and other people in Vahé's life introduce him to the trauma of the Armenian Genocide by way of a fragmented archive that revisits the aftermath of trauma upon him. Saunders and Avagyan hint at the phenomenon of transferred historical trauma in which they see victims as "haunted by an amnesia of origins, exilic dislocation, traumatic (post)memory, and the melancholia of cultural and linguistic loss," yet their scholarship engages debates within the field of trauma studies as inflected by theories of discipline (199).

The method that Saunders and Avagyan use is the first of two major analytical entry points suggested by the novel's two epigraphs. One of these dual epigraphs, a Biblical verse, promises punishment to those who "offend one of these little ones" (*The Daydreaming Boy* iii). Yes, this epigraph suggests a discipline approach to the novel. The other epigraph, an excerpt from William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, suggests another route. In the epigraph, the character of Sutpen discovers that he must do "not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not" to serve both his ancestors and his future descendants (iii). This epigraph emphasizes generational ties, familial legacies, and the presence and importance of the past in the present.

In Marcom's second novel, the eponymous "daydreaming boy" of the novel, Vahé, inhabits a postmemorial psychic condition, but his insufficient imagination confines him within its frustrations, its self-alienations. Though Vahé refuses to believe that his encounters with stories of the past have any resonance in his present, he becomes consumed by undigested fragments of the past that he is unable to assimilate or "own" in his own life. His desperation is fueled by his precarious state as an orphan in the Armenian diaspora in Beirut immediately following the Armenian Genocide. Poised between feelings of loss and abandonment, he seeks "the authentic," some self-affirming soulmate or image or story that will validate the fact of his sentient and historical existence. If he can construe such an enabling object of self-ratification as an embodiment of an authentic past, he reasons, then his attachment to it will center and amplify

his sense of being. But psychic and existential emptiness cannot be remedied by fattening up the self with memories of the past. It is postmemory's transformations that are required to meet this challenge and the imagination Vahé is capable of deploying proves insufficient because it only recycles loss through the heart and the mind. It is neither cathartic mourning nor postmemorial truth-internalizing nor diasporic "home-making." It is sadly a prescription for repeat victimization. It is self-annihilating daydreaming.

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Vahé arrives at the Bird's Nest Orphanage in Beirut after traveling there on an orphan transport train from Turkey as a preschool-aged child.[45] He lacks knowledge of his family members and what happened to them, for "[a]s for records there are none" (*The Daydreaming Boy* 64). Without records, Vahé chooses his own birthdate, one that is tellingly two years *after* the start of the Armenian Genocide (24).[46] When Vahé chooses to place his conception and birth after the date of the massacres that likely contributed to his orphaning, he reveals his reflex to distance himself from the monumental historical event that comes to

[45] Along with Saunders and Avagyan's article and James L. Barton's book about the Near East Relief, scholars interested in the historical plight of orphaned children after the Armenian Genocide should refer to Nazan Maksudyan's "Being Saved to Serve: Armenian Orphans of 1894-1896 and Interested Relief in Missionary Orphanages," Vahakn N. Dadrian's "Children as Victims of Genocide: The Armenian Case," Uğur Ümit Üngör's "Orphans, Converts, and Prostitutes: Social Consequences of War and Persecution in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1923," Isabel Kaprielian-Churchill's "The Armenian Genocide and the Survival of Children," and Keith David Watenpaugh's "'Are There Any Children for Sale?': Genocide and the Transfer of Armenian Children (1915–1922)."

[46] He doesn't even know his own name, so the orphanage administrators dub him "Vahé" (64). Vahé takes his "family name" from "the store vendor who sells the best candies" (32).

define his life at the orphanage and everywhere thereafter. And yet, though Vahé wishes he were born in 1917—two years after the start of the genocide—his life in Beirut is inflected and afflicted by a history he can't remember, a past largely transmitted to him through the pedagogy he receives at the orphanage.

Vahé listens to the lessons of the orphanage administrators, the Mayrigs ("the Mothers") and the Hayrig ("the Father"), and overhears the conversations of his elder orphaned peers about the exile, torture, and massacre of Armenians. In his summary of what he learned, Vahé explains that, "During our years of school at the Nest we were told the stories of before, of the boys from Kharphert orphanage, the Danish House, arrived in this place (the desert exodus, extracted fingernails, our fathers in piles)" (64). The abbreviated items Vahé lists in his parenthetical comment reflect the fragmentary archive of Vahé's pedagogy. From his surrogate parents and brothers, he learns that Armenians were marched through the Deir al-Zor Desert, that they were tortured if captured trying to escape, that Armenian men (possibly even the orphans' real fathers) were murdered en masse and thrown into mass graves. The truncated stories teach Vahé that he and the other orphans arrived at the Bird's Nest because something horrible had happened in the old country.

Though Vahé is given a kind of knowledge about the Armenian Genocide from the fragmented oral archive passed down to him in the orphanage, he perceives this pedagogy negatively because of the nature of its transmission. The memories that get passed down to Vahé at the orphanage come to him through an oft-repeated script. When Vahé verbatim repeats the ordered list a few lines

later in the same chapter, he admits that "As for the histories (the desert exodus, extracted fingernails, our fathers in piles) they are as foreign to me as any foreign country: my life began with the sea's panorama as the train wound its way down the mountains of the Lebanon into the city of Beirut" (64). Whether the stories were meant to teach Vahé a moral, political, or historical lesson, or whether they were stories told by survivors for their own coping purposes, the stories fail to resonate with Vahé who interprets them only as "foreign." His "foreign" experience with received genocide pedagogy suggests that the stories are strange and unfamiliar in spite of (and maybe even *because* of) the many repetitions he has performed of the ordered list. In this sense, "foreign" is a way for Vahé to mark his dissatisfaction with the pedagogy that was supposed to inculcate him to "never forget" the past. To Vahé, the list unsatisfactorily preserves a history he cannot own as a personal inheritance, and so, must be judged as such with the label of "foreign." The label deliberately creates and marks Vahé's distance from the past he says he cannot remember, yet the rest of his sentence reveals that Vahé desires a connection with the past he is distancing himself from. By using "the" instead of the personalized alternatives of "my" or "our," Vahé reveals that the transferred memories are not his nor his *personal* inheritance. The stories don't resonate with him, their very insufficiency frustrates him. In this way, Vahé exhibits postmemory's psychic condition of dissatisfaction that comes from feeling disconnected from the past. He wants, simultaneously, to distance himself from this past and find a means to own it in a self-defining way.

Dissatisfied with the transmitted past of the orphanage, Vahé begins searching for "authentic" self-affirming soul mates, images, and stories in the diaspora that he can latch onto instead of the "foreign" ordered list that he's made to repeat at the orphanage.

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Vahé's marriage to Juliana and his interactions with a fellow orphan named Andranik exemplify his dilemma for a self-presence that embraces and internalizes a past from which, intellectually, he'd prefer to escape. Initially, Vahé seeks a personal connection to the past in the physical features of his wife, Juliana. A singular trait drew Vahé to her—"*the dark hollows beneath* [*her eyes*]. [*The*] *black shadows beneath her eyes like some women wear rouge and lipstick,* […] *this preeminent and permanent black specter*" (127, emphasis in original). Vahé sees this "*irreversible sad nightmark*" as "*a bold truth in the mendacious decorous world with its unsaid unsayable things*" (126, 127, emphasis in original). The dark circles beneath Juliana's eyes are physical markers of the sad past of the Armenian Genocide, stories that were often "unsaid unsayable" because of various reasons in the diaspora (127). Some reasons were "mendacious" because of genocide denial that had already begun as early as the decade following the genocide (127).[47] Other

[47] According to Belinda Cooper & Taner Akcam's research, "Atatürk himself admitted and decried the killings of Armenians several times in the early postwar years, and his Ankara-based nationalist movement even agreed that accountability was necessary. At the urging of the occupying Allies, abortive trials of those responsible for the Armenian genocide were held in 1919, and they provided important factual evidence. But after the founding of the republic, denial set in. The actions of Ottoman forces were framed as a courageous defense of the empire against Western and Russian ambitions and the encroachments of

reasons were "decorous" because of embarrassment, shame, propriety, or even just a desire to move beyond the pain (127).[48] Despite these reasons for silence, Vahé believes that the dark circles under Juliana's eyes reveal the past's painful "unsaid" truths and allow him access to that past. So, when "*Over the years she covered it up and he lost this thought of her, he lost her darkness, her difference, and she farther away now and he unable to see back, to find his way back to the twenty-two-year-old girl with a black belt beneath her eyes like dark sunlight*," Vahé loses his connection to Juliana (127, emphasis in original). Before, the darkness under her eyes paradoxically illuminated her face for Vahé as he searched for connections to the past that tied all Armenians together. Now, Juliana's face without its dark

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Christianity. A number of the republic's founders had been involved in the Armenian genocide; they were glorified as heroic founding fathers, and their crimes disappeared from official histories" (Cooper & Akcam 83). For more information about the Republic of Turkey's policy of denial, see: Taner Akcam's *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide*, Belinda Cooper & Taner Akcam's "Turks, Armenians, and the 'G-Word,'" Ara Sarafiyan's "The Ottoman Archives Debate and the Armenian Genocide," Samantha Power's *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (especially pages 10 and 14-16), and Vahakn N. Dadrian's "Ottoman Archives and Denial of the Armenian Genocide."

[48] Armenian Genocide survivors had many reasons to stay silent about the past. In their research, oral historians Donald E. Miller & Lorna Touryan Miller explain that "One reason events are repressed is surely that they are too horrible to contemplate. But we also suspect that in some cases survivors' life histories are tinged with guilt and shame: memories of rape, forced nudity, humiliation of parents, the abandonment of siblings, coerced conversion to Islam, and so on" ("An Oral History Perspective on Responses to the Armenian Genocide" 192). For more information about the different responses of Armenian Genocide survivors to tell their stories, see: Donald E. Miller & Lorna Touryan Miller's "Typology of Survivor Accounts" (particularly pages 60-62 for "Repression"), Donald E. Miller & Lorna Touryan Miller's "An Oral History Perspective on Responses to the Armenian Genocide," Flora A. Keshgegian's "Defining Testimonies: Narrative Remembrances by Armenian Survivors of Genocide," and Jennifer Rinaldi's *Survivor Song: The Voice of Trauma, and Its Echoes* (especially pages 154-159).

circles is a face like anyone else's, a face without the difference that made him love her. Without Juliana's paradoxical "dark sunlight" to shine a pathway into the dark past, Vahé returns to the feeling he had after hearing the stories of his caretakers at the orphanage. He again feels disconnected from the past he didn't personally experience, though he had a tenuous connection with it in the face of his wife. Further, Vahé's estrangement from Juliana is marked by the text, since the italicized portion of the chapter marks Vahé's inner thoughts in reference to his and Juliana's initial acquaintance. The typographic shift echoes how Vahé never felt comfortable enough to tell "*her in all of these many years how [he] hated it when she began to cover up this beautiful darkness*" (127, emphasis in original). Without Juliana's physical darkness to tether him personally to the past of the Armenian Genocide, Vahé must seek other methods to forge the connection.

If Juliana's face was a failed method for personally connecting to the past, Vahé sees the totality of their relationship as another method. Initially, Vahé hoped that his marriage might offer him a connection to his lost past. In an imagined conversation with his unknown mother, Vahé asserts the surviving generation's responsibility and ability to "remake the unremembered the unhistoried because the progeny can do it, our durance at its end, we all of us break the wind with our bodies put the light off its course with enough of our forms" (132). Fighting against the metaphoric elements of wind and light, Vahé expresses his belief that the diaspora's new generation can fight off the disappearance of Armenians and their community outside of the homeland after the events of the genocide. They could rescue the lost members of their group,

allowing Armenians to endure despite their diminished numbers when it would have been easy, as natural as succumbing to the twin natural forces of wind and light, to let the group die out. Further, the new generation can free the surviving generation from its "durance," its imprisonment inside mounting obligations and expectations to ensure the endurance of the race. The words that Vahé speaks pile up, unpunctuated, as the bodies of the survivor generation might multiply with the procreation he craves. With Juliana, Vahé could have added to these numbers by fathering a child "willing to bear and bear the rest of the clan down through into History, thicken the blood and bring it home and gather it together and saying 'We are here!' and by this she means we can return" (132). As part of the diaspora of "dispersed and attenuated blood," Vahé lives outside the ancestral Armenian homelands of Central Anatolia (132). If he had procreated, that spread out and uncharacteristic weakened blood might have been thickened by another member. Juliana and Vahé's marriage could have produced a child that would "make what [Vahé's mother] gave [him] not in vain and somehow a small victory, an unhistoried vanquish, made so by the blood's continued rush through veins and artery into out of a pumping heart to remember you" (132). The blood of his mother flows through Vahé's veins, and it would have continued to flow through the veins of his children. Their lives would have been reminders of and testaments to those that were lost.[49] Their lives would have been small victories against the destruction that had been

[49] Children born after a traumatic event have been called "memorial candles" by scholars of the Holocaust. See Dina Wardi's *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*.

planned for Armenians in the genocide. Had he and Juliana procreated, Vahé could have forged his desired personal connection to the past by continuing the family line. In this scene, the dominant desire is a sentimental one—Vahé wants to create a child with Juliana who would allow him to "remake" the family members that he lost in the genocide and reunite with them in a prelapsarian homeland.

Despite the hopes that Vahé had for making a family with Juliana that might help him connect to the past through a bloodline, his ruminations on the topic elsewhere in the novel reveal that he interprets the task of procreation as a futile trap for the generation living in the diaspora after the genocide. He remembers when he first met Juliana, how he thought to himself, "*the attenuated blood flows in you, stretched out across the Der-el-Zor and the Lebanon because we all of us here adrift and because the past is always unspoken heavy and ever-present like some invisible unfurled ribbon and we entangled in it as we are in our own blood*" (127, emphasis in original). In this version of their relationship, Vahé isn't as optimistic about their pairing. Just as in the previous scene, the Armenian race's blood in this version is also "attenuated," unnaturally thinned by being dispersed across the Middle East after a genocide diminished its ranks' numbers. But this time the blood cannot be thickened, strengthened, and reinvigorated with newly-borne members. The blood this time is like the entangling ribbon of the past that stifles and constricts. Both Juliana and Vahé are entangled by this ribbon of blood and the past—they are both removed from their ancestral homes, "adrift" in the Levant, but tethered still to the past that their parents left behind in Anatolia

(127). Yet instead of seeing this connection as a positive aspect of the diaspora,[50] Vahé remarks on the ribbon's invisibility because members of the diaspora do not speak about this "heavy and ever-present" past (127). Largely because Vahé's desire to strengthen his group's numbers and ensure their continuation is a desire particular to a diasporic generation borne out of genocide, he doesn't see his efforts to start a family as a way to *personally* connect to the past.[51] He sees the instrumentality of his and Juliana's marriage for preserving and enriching the Armenian community, but he questions how useful their family creation would be for his desire to connect to the past on a personal and intimate level since *everyone* is entangled in the past of their race. The entangling nature of what Vahé perceives as obligatory procreation is echoed in one of the novel's two epigraphs. This epigraph, from William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, frames Vahé's predicament exactly:

> All of a sudden he discovered, not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not, because if he did not do it he knew that he could never live with himself for the rest of his life, never live with what all the men and women that had died to make him had left inside of him for him to pass on, with all the dead ones waiting and watching to see if he was going to do it right, fix things right so that he would be able to look in the face not only the old dead ones but all the living ones that would come after him when he would be one of the dead. (iii)

[50] For example, diaspora scholar Robin Cohen, in his *Global Diasporas*, argues for the "positive virtues" of living away from the homeland in diaspora. He posits that "The tension between an ethnic, a national and a transnational identity is often a creative, enriching one" (Cohen 24).

[51] See "Coping with Ottoman Turkish Genocide: An Exploration of the Experience of Armenian Survivors" by Anie S. Kalayjian, Siroon P. Shahinian, Edmund L. Gergerian, and Lisa Saraydarian for more information about the urge/obligation to procreate after a traumatic event.

Vahé's predicament aligns with the character in Faulkner's novel, Sutpen, whom Quentin's grandfather explains had much pressure to "fix things right" in light of the past. Like Sutpen, Vahé feels obligated to do something to honor the dead and to make sure the future progeny remember him fondly. This obligation makes Vahé feel the weight of responsibility for keeping his line going when so much had happened during the genocide to make sure that he and his people were wiped out. With the obligation weighing him down, Vahé assures himself that his relationship with Juliana could never yield a personal connection to the past because it is mired in expectations of instrumental diasporic survival.

As he had with Juliana, Vahé has similar unsatisfactory attempts with other members of the diaspora to personally connect to the past. He looks to his fellow orphans to show him the way. In two separate chapters, Vahé describes a chance meeting over drinks years after he had left the orphanage, started his career as a carpenter, and married Juliana. This meeting with another orphan named Andranik leaves Vahé reeling because his connection to the past of the genocide is revealed to be extremely personal and painful. Over glasses of *arak*, a sweet licorice liquor popular in the Middle East, the men catch up on their lives since the orphanage. The conversation starts with the usual pleasantries about wives, families, professions, summer plans. Then Andranik asks probing questions about Vahé's arrival at the orphanage and his harsh treatment by the other orphan boys. He "wondered about it, the things we could not ask when we were boys—about how you came to be dropped off at the orphanage in Kharphert; how you spoke not one word of Armenian and your unintelligible

cry for months that we couldn't understand until you slowly began to understand us and the boys wanting to beat that Turkish out of you like one might beat a pet dog for disobeying and shitting the carpet and you there shat upon and pissed by the boys in those hot boxcars" (137-138). If Vahé had been searching for a personal connection to the past of the genocide, Andranik gave him a significant one. By Andranik's account, when Vahé arrived at the Bird's Nest, he couldn't speak Armenian. He only spoke Turkish. His circumstance was a common one during the years of the genocide and shortly thereafter. There are several documented accounts of Armenian children and women who had been bought by Turkish or Kurdish families as servants or concubines.[52] As Middle East historian Keith David Watenpaugh describes in his 2013 article for the *Journal of Human Rights*, these women and children are "[d]escribed euphemistically as *kılıç artığı* ('remnants of the sword')" by Turkish society today (291). Though he hadn't been murdered by the sword for being Armenian, Vahé had been a victim of the genocide himself because he was forced into a Turkish household where he lost his language and culture. His connection to the genocide is extremely personal—he was one of its victims in his infancy. The genocide stories he had heard at the orphanage might not have felt personal to Vahé, but this story should feel extremely personal. And yet Vahé doesn't allow

[52] For more information about Armenian women and children being adopted or enslaved in Turkish homes, see Keith David Watenpaugh's "'Are There Any Children for Sale?': Genocide and the Transfer of Armenian Children (1915–1922)", Vahakn N. Dadrian's "Children as Victims of Genocide: The Armenian Case," and Lerna Ekmekcioglu's "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide."

himself to feel anything in response to Andranik's revelations. He keeps asking "Pardon?" and even thinks to himself "*no no no*" when Andranik poses these questions to him about his past (*The Daydreaming Boy* 138, 139). Instead of realizing that the emotional truth he had learned from the stories he heard at the orphanage—that he is temporally and geographically distant from the Armenian Genocide, that his condition is one of belatedness and disconnection—isn't *actually* true, Vahé rejects the real personal connection he had to the Armenian Genocide as one of its victims. He rejects that his victimhood actually made him a target of hatred and violence at the orphanage, where the other orphans abused the "vile black mark of Cain, that Turk mark" out of him (138). In these interactions with other members of the Armenian diaspora in Beirut, Vahé cannot sate his desire for authentic and personal connections to the Armenian Genocide. In each case, Vahé thinks that he wants to embrace the past, but he cannot get himself to do it and, in fact, repels the past when confronted with it head-on. Though he had the opportunity to accept that he actually has a strong personal connection to the past, he denies the past and his feelings about it. He must look elsewhere for embodiments of the past that would affirm his own limited idea of selfhood.

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Vahé's stunted efforts to embrace the past that he simultaneously wants to leave behind lead him to take refuge in archival documents. Sadly, Vahé's imaginative capabilities do not transform the archival sources for purposes of

passionate remembering. As he imagines the stories behind archival documents, he merely projects himself onto the picture.

The archival documents that Vahé discovers only serve as sites for him to project his own feelings. Chapter 34 of Book II reproduces one of Vahé's historical sources—the chapter is plucked from James L. Barton's chronicle of a humanitarian organization that helped Armenian orphans, *Story of Near East Relief (1915–1930): An Interpretation*. In a novel mostly narrated by Vahé, the chapter speaks in the voice of an orphanage administrator, rendered in a different printed font than the rest of the novel.[53] Vahé doesn't describe where he found the excerpt, how he found it, nor what he thinks of it. And yet his influence is everywhere in it because Vahé's version of the scene in Barton's book is not exactly the scene that Barton describes. In Barton's version, a young girl arrives at an Armenian orphanage without any knowledge of Armenian or her parents' names, with a Turkish name of Salema, and with a vague knowledge of the Christian "Heavenly Father" when asked about her parents. Barton concludes that the girl "had come from a Christian home but where that home was or who her parents were we never found out" (Barton 225). In Vahé's version of the same scene as printed in *The Daydreaming Boy*, the sex of the foundling is changed to male, the Turkish name for him is changed to Mustafa, and the orphanage is named as the Danish House orphanage in Kharphert, Turkey. All other details are unchanged. The changes that Vahé makes to the

[53] The only other chapter with this font is another "archival" source, an article from Beirut's *The Daily Star* paper about the similarities between the brains of early man and gorillas (88).

original report are telling, in that he inserts himself into the history that he'd read about in an archival text. In other chapters of the novel, Vahé admits that he knows that his group of orphans came from the Kharphert region of Turkey.[54] While he knows he came from Kharphert, Vahé does not know for certain how he ended up at the orphanage. At points throughout the novel, Vahé offers possibilities for his orphaning. In one possible explanation, he imagines that he might have been sold to a Turkish woman who renames him "Mustafa" and he has to relearn the Armenian language because he'd forgotten it in a Turkish home.[55] These details correspond to the version of Vahé's past that his fellow orphan, Antranig, reminds him about during their alcohol-fueled meetings and that Vahé fundamentally rejects with his repeated "*no no no* Pardon? Pardon? Pardon?" (*The Daydreaming Boy* 139). When Vahé rewrites the historical document from Barton's chronicle, he puts his story at its center. In doing so, Vahé doesn't acknowledge the presence of the girl, Salema, whose story he co-opted for telling his own narrative. Taken together, the meeting with Antranig and the projected archival document mark Vahé's simultaneous reflex to embrace and repel the past. He meets with Antranig to "reminisce" about their past, but he is horrified by Antranig's all-too-real reminder of the traumatic past Vahé experienced; he searches for the authentic past in archives, but doesn't allow the victims of the past a chance to speak as themselves because he supplants their story with his own.

[54] See pages 64, 126-127.
[55] See pages 95-98, 137-139, 133.

A similar push-and-pull motion animates Vahé's interactions with an archival photo. As Vahé scours books and journals looking for references to his own family's past, he finds a "photo of a Kharphertsi boy, black and white, Ottoman Empire 1915" (58). By Vahé's description of the photograph, the boy from Vahé's own home village is "covered head to toe in rags, in layers of torn cotton and wool," with "too long sleeves" that make his hands look "invisible" (58). His "feet splay as if they have done much shoeless walking" (58). The boy's rags and stance preserve his long journey through, presumably, the Deir al-Zor desert. But it is the orphan boy's stare that draws Vahé in: "the look of sadness—in this photograph I can see it. It is not the rags that tell of it, his stance with the bared knee slightly bent, or the invisible hands, I assume he has hands. What marks the public sadness for this boy? I think it is his look to the German, what he must have hoped for in the European soldier; he stopped walking or begging and stood still for the foreigner, looked up at him calmly—see me, he doesn't say, I am the sad boy" (59). It seems that Vahé has found the archival document that allows him to feel a personal connection with the past and that allows the past to come alive as itself for productive effect in the present.

Yet Vahé's description of the importance of the photograph reveals that the photograph is important to Vahé only because he sees himself in it, albeit in relief. In the photograph, Vahé sees "a sad boy, he misses what he had known, the heat of the hearth, the open orchard with the figs hanging low and the pomegranates dipping to the ground from too heavy boughs, the soft voices at night, a lullaby" (60). The boy's sad look is a physical reminder of all that the boy

lost in his ancestral home of Kharphert: the homes, the orchards, the family life. Vahé, who was ostensibly born two years after the genocide, in 1917, claims he never experienced these markers of Armenian life in Central and Eastern Anatolia. They had already been dismantled, destroyed, and disappeared by the time he thinks he was born. That lost world also wasn't preserved in the faces of Vahé and Vahé's fellow orphans at the Bird's Nest because "the boys that were raised up in the Nest never wore the orphan's mask of sorrow and despair. We wouldn't have lasted out a week" (60). Taught by the cruelty of the other boys in the orphanage to act tough or be punished for showing weakness, Vahé and his peers at the orphanage in Beirut were disciplined into ignoring all vestiges of their former lives, even if they were too young to remember it anyhow. Vahé is denied, by the conditioning of his circumstances, the possibility of expressing a sentimental *response*. The photograph that Vahé carries around in his wallet is a record of Vahé's own feelings, sentimental feelings that he was not allowed to physically express on his own face. The orphan in the photograph shows Vahé to himself by highlighting the emotions that Vahé hid that the boy made visible. Further, as Vahé imagines how the photograph was taken, he projects his denied emotions onto the scene. Just as the orphan boy remains silent about his sadness ("see me, *he doesn't say*, I am the sad boy"), Vahé too hides his emotions (59, emphasis mine). Vahé connects the photograph to his denied negative affects in a later scene. He imagines apologizing to Juliana, and he uses the photograph to express his emotional state: "I'm sorry for that also: this notfeeling. But I'm sure it lives in me, like a kidney or like a lost photograph of a boy: he is an orphan boy

from the time before; he is clothed in rags and his hands (if he has them) are hidden by too-long sleeves and his feet are bare and he has the look of the orphan, the look of sorrow and despair; and I never had it, only carried it inside, invisible" (185). Instead of enlivening the past by imagining the story behind the photograph, Vahé uses the photograph to affirm his own projected sense of self. The photograph and the boy's look make visible Vahé's sentimental desires to have a family and a home, desires that Vahé was forced to hide at the orphanage. The photograph in the billfold and Vahé's imagined scene of its creation serve as a venue for Vahé to project his own emotional state. Instead of passionate remembering of the past, Vahé makes the past as seen in the archival materials mirror his present hidden feelings.

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Though Vahé fails to enliven the past in his projections, he intuitively understands that his imagination can offer him the existential plentitude he desires. Unfortunately, the particular kind of imagination—the "sentimental imagination"—that Vahé deploys is doomed to failure. In his efforts to restore the prelapsarian family, Vahé denies and perverts the monumental event that makes his fantasy of reunion impossible.

At a moment of strife, when Vahé tells Juliana about his "love" for Béatrice, the Palestinian maid who works for another couple in the same apartment building, Vahé find some comfort by escaping into his imagination. In his fantasy, he attempts to rescue a fully-intact family that would be reunited if he and Juliana were able to

> rise from our beds as black crows and we will fly out our balcony doors and head northward then east and we'll return to those villages surrounding the rocky outcroppings and mothers await us, fathers and uncles till fields with hands raised and openhanded to welcome us back. Our houses as we left them, our siblings play in the orchards. We'll make mulberry taffies we'll eat flat bread we'll slaughter a young lamb and cook its flesh. (And we'll never again eat grass for our dinner.) And we'll fly out of this place and when we arrive we will say: the seasons have turned on their head and time is illusory, take off your wristwatches, take off the sun calendar, and hold it hold it, we'll follow the moon's light: we are here and returned. (153)

The ancestral home of Kharphert is restored in Vahé's fantasy: the family members that died in the genocide are all alive, the houses are not destroyed, the mulberry trees are still alive and producing, the traditional rituals of lamb feats for marked days are continued.[56] The idealized Anatolian village is "frozen" by Vahé in a photograph: his "hold it hold it" sounds like the orders of a photographer to his subjects to remain in their places until the final take (153). In a sense, Vahé wants to deny that the traumatic past ever happened in his prelapsarian fantasy; there is no need for wristwatches or sundials in his imagined version of the past because time stops before the impending genocide can sweep through to destroy everything. Vahé's sentimental imagination renounces his present (where he has to admit that he can never be reunited with his family whose names he cannot remember) in favor of rescuing an imagined past from destruction (where the family members are still alive and well). He desires a past devoid of the violence that brought him to Beirut. Essentially, he

[56] As Irina Petrosian & David Underwood describe in *Armenian Food: Fact, Fiction, & Folklore*, "The climax to every religious festival was the ritual slaughter of a large number of animals including bulls, cows, sheep, goats, and oxen" (71).

wants to pretend the traumatic event never happened. Despite Vahé's desire to restore the prelapsarian past, a singular reference to the genocide creeps in with a parenthetical about the survival strategy of eating grass in the Deir al-Zor desert where there was no food to be found.[57] Even in his imagination Vahé cannot find total refuge—the historical realities he tries to erase from the sentimental, idealized scene sneak in nonetheless.

Vahé attempts to gain control of his imagination and assert his selfhood in response. The most disturbing example of this assertion is when Vahé imagines his absent mother telling him about her experience of sexual victimization. The unnamed mother speaks:

> *I can still fuck it and the children grow in my belly not of my volition and my volition doesn't inhibit the seed its latching onto the walls of my womb and grows. I did not will it and they ate at my table uninvited and they are born into it with no one sense of themselves than sheep for the slaughterer, good laborers. Every year I bore a child (not of mine) and I can kill him because he can never be mine. This is how I do it* (68, emphasis in original)

Before she can explain how she would kill the children that were the product of her continual rapes by an unnamed aggressor, Vahé interrupts her with the story of his own feelings of abandonment: "How is it that we can suffer and it keeps on, […] perhaps you never loved me. You hated my father because he made the child you didn't want, the bastard, the Muslim, the Turk he forced into your

[57] According to Miller & Miller's research on Armenian survivor stories of the forced marches across the Deir al-Zor desert, "Local Turks were apparently prohibited from giving food to passing caravans of Armenians, and after the Armenians had been plundered, they lost not only the supplies they were carrying but also the means of purchasing more. As a result, they were forced to eat the grass that grew alongside the road" (*Survivors* 86).

womb and created what you now hated" (68). Vahé's imagined scene begins with his mother explaining her plight as one of the Armenian women who were abducted by Turkish or Kurdish men and forced to raise children borne of violence.[58] She admits that she despised the children that could "never be mine" because they were the products of forced copulation. Vahé begins his imagined scene by allowing his mother a chance to speak about her victimization, but he cannot bring himself to imagine how she would have permanently abandoned him by infanticide. At heart, Vahé's description of his mother here emerges from his sentimentalization of family—he wishes she loved him and his imagined father, that they were able to live as a happy nuclear family. The imagined scene with his mother becomes a way for Vahé to express his own feelings, not the feelings of his imagined mother whom he silences once she begins speaking of actions he would rather not hear. If at the start of the scene Vahé desired a self-affirming story about the mother he never knew, the monologue that he creates in his head takes him to a self-destructive position instead.

In the rest of the chapter, Vahé continues to use his imagined version of the past not for the purposes of passionate remembering, but in order to allow his present desires and concerns a venue for expression. Once Vahé interrupts his mother, she no longer speaks and he takes control of the scene to satisfy his

[58] Historian Lerna Ekmekcioglu's research uncovered memos from Ottoman Interior Minister Talat Pasha that mandated the forced marriage of young unmarried and widowed Armenian women (527). In her article, "A Climate for Abduction, a Climate for Redemption: The Politics of Inclusion during and after the Armenian Genocide," Ekmekcioglu explains that these women often bore children from their rapes or forced marriages, and oftentimes these children would be willfully ignored or abandoned (547).

own twisted desires. After expressing a belief that he was unloved, Vahé narrates the unfolding scene of his mother's sexual violation. In describing the rape, Vahé admits that

> The blood is bright on your lips and nose and I am aroused, like my father[, a Turkish man]. Slap her, he slaps you. Force her legs open, he opens your legs and the ecstasy of it! Mother, he is fucking you and you scratch his face again and he slaps you again. Fuck her, and he does. (Bua bua bua) I am holding my cock now (it's hot today) my shirt is off and my trousers are open to my hips. (69)

Vahé shapes his fantasy, almost like a movie director, by yelling commands to his imagined father as he rapes his mother. In taking violent control of the violent scene, Vahé becomes the aggressor telling the rapist what to do. The way that Vahé takes control the scene means that he is restored as the dominant actor in his imagination. Further, in taking pleasure and becoming aroused by the scene he sees, Vahé's emotional state corresponds to the rapist's. He aligns himself with the aggressor, and not with the victim who had denied him the self-affirming story of his conception. In this reversal of roles (Armenian as victim, Turk as aggressor), Vahé can become the more powerful party oppressing both his father (whom he directs to enact violence) and his mother (who is victimized by both Turkish aggressor and bastard son). His mother's nonsense screams of "bua bua bua" in "the dead language" of the dominated Armenian don't stop Vahé from ending the chapter with a cryptic, unfinished sentence: "*I don't like to kill her but I do what makes me*" (68; 70, emphasis in original). The violence of this scene diverts attention from Vahé's desire to assert his selfhood. In directing his father to rape his mother in a scene that might have been the imagined version of

his own conception, Vahé simultaneously completes the nuclear family—the father, the mother, and the son are together in a single cinematic shot—and ensures that he is "born" as a result of the rape.

Vahé's imagination unwittingly ensnares him. In some scenes of his imagination, he "saves" his family members from oblivion. In others, he enacts violence against the very family he wanted to rescue. In both cases, the past is not transformed in the present for enablement. In the first, Vahé idealizes the prelapsarian past and denies the event that tore his family apart. In the second, Vahé inserts himself into imagined scenes in order to enact violence against the family members that have scorned him.

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In the absence of an imagination that transforms the "archive" and preserves an enabling and enriching feature of the trauma in and for the present, two disturbing and significant events—a rape and a "suicide"—explain the misguided diasporic logic of Vahé's violence. Unable to see that the diasporic subject creates "home" in each new location in which she find herself by imaginatively transforming memories of the homeland to enrich living in the present, Vahé's desire to "return home" becomes none other than a drive to repeat genocidal victimization at an individual level.

Vahé's rape of the Palestinian maid Béatrice is the violent effect of his desire to regain what he believes he had lost by being the orphaned progeny of a likely sexual violation. Having lost his mother to death or abandonment, Vahé admits that he desires the "map of your body, Mother. In your body I could find

everything I need. The man who has no mother's form to form him is a sad man" (62). Missing the body of his mother to give his life the meaning and direction he thinks it will give him, Vahé first imagines violating his mother's body but later finds a physical body—Béatrice's—with which he can ground his identity. The connection between the bodies of Vahé's imagined mother and Béatrice emerges in his graphic and problematic description of the sexual violence he commits against Béatrice. Like his mother who screams "bua bua bua" in "the dead language ([the Turkish aggressor] heard your syllable-sounds like a sheepherder hears the latent ram)," Béatrice screams in "her southern gutturals" that Vahé stop his violent act (68, 205). He cannot stop, because he believes that "The sooth flesh I required to get a little bit of it back, a small immeasurable ineffable return: inside that girl's flesh I was (say it!—Says): home" (206). Given the memories of the Armenian Genocide that were passed down to him, given the idealized past that is constantly interrupted by violence, given the violence that he imagines as his own conception, Vahé believes he can only be at "home" if the past is restored in the present in all its violence. Vahé even uses the language of recovery of the past here, framing his rape of Béatrice as a "return" to the origins that he had lost and as getting "a little bit of it back." But Vahé's "return home" is a distortion of the successful achievement of postmemorial effects. When describing his reasons for violating Béatrice, Vahé uses language that, disturbingly, echoes my own definition of postmemory's existential outcome. He admits that "to not fuck it with Béatrice was to be dead and I needed to live" (204). Vahé wants the life-enabling payoff of postmemory—the feeling that life is

worth living when a particular feature of ancestral trauma is productively kept alive in the present—but he problematically inflicts violence in the process of trying because his imagination was unable to transform the past in ways that would not revisit the past's violences on others.

Vahé's efforts to reach the existential outcome of postmemory are misguided because of his imagination's limitations and his own misunderstanding of what it means to create a "home" in the diaspora. Vahé's murder by the hands of militant Muslims during the Civil War in Beirut marks his fundamental misunderstanding of "home." While his decision, as a nominal Christian, to stay in West Beirut after it was made into an exclusively "Muslim district" could be read as a rebellion against systemic violence, Vahé actually ends up revisiting the past's violence on himself with his refusal.[59] He says "I'll not go, not leave this place; my home" and is shot in the head for it (211). He takes on the victimized role of the Armenians during the Armenian Genocide by refusing to leave. Though his decision stems from his desire to not repeat what he knows about Armenians who "had followed the demoniac policemen, the moving caravans—had walked out of their villages" in Central Anatolia, Vahé still ends up murdered like his ancestors (33). The word Vahé uses here to justify his decision to stay—"home"—connects the scene of his murder with the scene of Béatrice's victimization. In both, Vahé affirms his actions uphold the new

[59] For more on the history of the Civil War in Beirut, see Farid El-Khazen's *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967-1976*, Edgar O'Ballance's *Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92*, Theodor Hanf's *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon: Decline of a State and Rise of a Nation*, Marius Deeb's *The Lebanese Civil War*, Robert Fisk's *Pity the Nation: Lebanon at War*, and Itamar Rabinovich's *The War for Lebanon, 1970-1985*.

home he manages to create in Beirut. But, the violences inflicted are misunderstandings of a diasporic tenet: Though you might not be able to physically return "home," you can always "return" in passionate remembering.

Diaspora theory has long made connections between dispersed populations and the homelands to which they still align. One of William Safran's six characteristics of diaspora is that the members of a diaspora "regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions are appropriate" (Safran 83-84). Others, like Robin Cohen, have theorized how even diasporas created from violent upheavals desire to maintain this connection to the homeland. Per Cohen's coinage, "victim diasporas" are those that "experienced a decisive 'break event' in their histories" that "widely dispersed" the population yet allowed its members to cling "on to a collective memory and myth about the homeland, its location and its achievements" (Cohen 57). Cohen's articulation of victim diasporas suggests that dispersions of populations are often involuntary, and that the connection to the homeland can be complicated by never being able to return as a result of exile and violence. Safran concedes that "homeland" is complicated by the fact that many diaspora members never "return" to their homelands, that the "'return' of most diasporas (much like the Second Coming or the next world) can thus been seen as a largely eschatological concept: it is used to make life more tolerable by holding out a utopia—or eutopia—that stands in contrast to the perceived dystopia in which actual life is lived" (Safran 94). For these populations, then, "home" does not necessarily

mean returning physically to the homeland. Another diaspora scholar, Avtar Brah, reinterprets "home" to mean "a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no return even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'" (Brah 192). Both Safran's and Brah's work suggests that the importance of returning to the homeland is more about its affective power, where real geographic movement is secondary.

If return is so important an idea and if it is often impossible to achieve in reality, recent diaspora scholarship has shown that the imagination emerges as the preferred way to "return." Diaspora scholar Khachig Tölölyan has already posited that "a diaspora that is born of catastrophe inflicted on the collective suffers trauma and usually becomes a community to which the work of memory, commemoration, and mourning is central, shaping much of its cultural production and political commitment" ("The Contemporary Discourse of Diaspora Studies" 649). In a diaspora created from violent events, its members must rely on staged events of memory transfer to maintain a link to the homeland instead of physically returning to it. As Hamid Naficy, a film scholar who analyzes diasporic movies, posits, "For many political exiles, return [to the homeland] is impossible, making a metaphoric, imaginative, or filmic staging of it a viable option" (Naficy 236). For these populations, imaginatively creating a scene of return to the homeland are substitutes for physical visits there. This development is a logical conclusion of diaspora scholars' founding belief in the importance of memory in maintaining the diaspora. In a special issue of

Thamyris/Intersecting detailing the connection between memory and diaspora, Marie-Aude Baronian and her collaborators assert that "memory is at once the condition and the necessary limit of diasporic identities" (Baronian, et. al 12). In other words, these scholars insist that there is "No diaspora without memory" and that "Every form of memory […] depends on re-articulations and re-enactments. Its contents are necessarily modified and invented as they are remembered" (Baronian, et. al 12, 12). Memory scholar Andreas Huyssen echoes these remarks linking diaspora, memory, and imagination by arguing that "Diasporic memory in its traditional sense is by definition cut off, hybrid, displaced, split. This fact grounds the affinity of diasporic memory in the structure of memory itself, which is always based on temporal displacement between the act of remembrance and the content of that which is remembered, an act of *recherche* rather than recuperation" (Huyssen 85). Both Huyssen and Baronian et. al concede that the diaspora built on memory is always also dependent on imagination, since each memory is "modified and invented" as it is redeployed in times and places that diverge from their origins. In recent diaspora scholarship, imagination is described as the preferred method to access the homeland when it's impossible to literally return.

The imagination's ability to create home wherever the diaspora member resides is the ability that Vahé lacks by relying on his sentimental imagination. The prelapsarian Anatolian town he imagines is his ancestral home denies the history that led him to his present in Beirut. The Palestinian girl in whose flesh Vahé finds "home" is violated in the process just like the victims of the past. The

home that Vahé refuses to leave is the avoidable location of his "suicide" by murder. Vahé misunderstands one of the founding tenets of diaspora and "goes home" at great human cost as a result.

"HE SOUGHT THE DEAD SO THAT HE MIGHT LIVE": THE PROMISE OF ANALOGIC POSTMEMORY IN *DRAINING THE SEA*

Micheline Aharonian Marcom's third novel, 2008's *Draining the Sea*, appears to tell the story of a character very similar to the afflicted protagonist of *The Daydreaming Boy*. Like Vahé, the unnamed man of *Draining the Sea* initially refuses to admit that stories of the past affect him in his present.[60] The five phrases his mother passed down to him about his ancestors' experiences during the Armenian Genocide initially fail to resonate but ultimately prove significant to his sense of self. But the two protagonists diverge in what they do with their inherited memories of the past: Vahé eventually defines himself and becomes consumed by the past's narratives of loss, and thus can only revisit victimization upon himself and others. The man in *Draining the Sea* interrogates the malaise that characterizes his prosperous American life by way of an analogic imagination, ultimately acknowledging his diasporic existence in a manner that invigorates his conscience, his sense of his life's implication in his own Armenian history and in genocidal massacres in the contemporary world. The man eventually recognizes the ever-present sadness of the past that lurks beneath his comfortable malaise and then transforms that sadness into an emotional portal, one that opens him up to a sense of connection and a call to principle that encompasses a pan-ethnic and pan-national attention to human rights.

[60] Throughout this chapter, I will refer to Marcom's narrator in *Draining the Sea* as "the man."

The unnamed man who narrates most of the novel's five "Books" is a half-Armenian American man who lives in modern-day Los Angeles. Feeling the malaise of being disconnected from and dissatisfied with his knowledge of his Armenian heritage and the insatiable frivolities of his fellow Americans, the man retreats to his green armchair and begins to write looping, meandering, and disordered prose in an attempt to know the ancestral past transmitted to him by his mother's five phrases. The man's entry into this world comes by way of an Ixil woman who appears to him as a projection of his analogic imagination. This woman, Marta, is a contemporary voice for a living trauma, a voice immanent in but inaccessible as the five phrases. With Marta's arrival, the man builds a new "archive" by combining his inherited five phrases with the imagined person of Marta herself. The analogic imagination which created Marta now works to transform the newly-combined archive which had earlier marked the man's malaise into that which prompts self-recognition and awareness. Marta helps the man turn malaise into self-recognition by vocalizing the sadness of trauma; picturing the fact of violence; demanding the attention of conscience; and revealing the man's past and present entailments to himself in a way that defines him as sentient and principled. The man's analogic imagination transforms his gained sense of self-recognition into animating internalized truths about the relation of sentience to conscience by way of teaching him about the usefulness of synecdoche, of inventing an auditor, of skepticism of the "image," of self-stereotyping in popular media, and of creating a genocidally-hybrid self-defining narrative. By the fifth and final Book, the man successfully gains knowledge and

understanding of himself and both his Armenian inheritance and the experiences of others who have lost much. He transcends the individual and arrives at a place of pure love, understanding, and hope. The payoff is a postmemorial one, since the man gains it only after he realizes that "[h]e sought the dead so that he might live" (Marcom, *Draining the Sea* 302). At the very end of the novel, so that they too might live, the man urges the readers of his narrative to follow his lead: they too must realize that emotion underwrites conscience. In this way, analogic postmemory offers opportunities for achieving, in print, the greatest promise of affect theory—a new mode of intimate interaction that can change the present and the future.

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The man of *Draining the Sea* lives in a comfortable house in Los Angeles, diligently works at his office job, watches too much television, and eats too many sweets. Firmly planted in a prosperous American lifestyle, the man seems to have achieved notable success. Indeed, he asks himself, "Who could be happier than me? I am a man who drinks coffees, eats and drinks and buys and works and all of his desires fulfilled when his desire says this thing thatthing *now*" (229). The man's desire drives him to do all that he can to satiate it, but his desire becomes increasingly demanding and unsatisfied, breathlessly desiring "thatthing *now*." By the man's own admission elsewhere in the novel, though he is able to materially satisfy his desire, "I have never been a happy man and it is my knowing without knowing" (206). What knowledge does the man have that he doesn't fully understand? In a series of musings and ruminations in the five

Books that he writes, the man finds that his unhappiness partly emerges from his conflicted relationship with the past, one for which he feels little but nonetheless regards as an inheritance. All the half-Armenian man knows about the genocide has been transmitted to him by his Armenian mother through five phrases referring to the man's grandmother: "They came for her father in the middle of the night. / She never saw him again. / Her mother and sisters were sent on the march to the Der Zor. / They passed beneath her window. / She never saw them again" (268). These five terse phrases provide the man with an abridged version of his family's painful past, one which inflicts another kind of pain. As he explains it:

> my own foreign mother who made for herself an American boy, and tried to cut the sadness histories of her memory and family-history like fat and unattractive ulcers (but for the five bare phrases, which fell out of her mouth and into English, as if without volition, the bones of the story). The American man is made into a modern monster; a man without a place or any of a history's heft (its rage perhaps?), filled with raw unmapped places which could be like rats […]—but whence his maladie? malaise? He does not know its past as if the past were still devouring him; the rats (252)

When the man's Americanized mother shed her past and embraced the frivolity of America, she attempted to cut the "sadness histories […] like fat and unattractive ulcers," but her surgery isn't completely successful since the phrases slip out of her mouth and transfer some of that sadness to her son through the "bones of the story" preserved in the "bare" phrases (252). And yet, the man does not have "any of a history's heft" because he had decided to shed the weighty bones of his inherited story as his mother had decided to cut the sadness from her family's life (252). Renouncing the phrases leaves the man only with

inexplicable "maladie" and "malaise" without a specific origin (252). Not knowing the reason for his ill health and his unease, the infirm modern American man without the phrases is consumed by them though he doesn't recognize it.

The man's malaise leaves him wanting, and his imagination projects a figure named Marta to help him recognize the source of his malaise. She appears to the man at "night in Los Angeles, three a.m. in Los Angeles," fifteen years after her death in Guatemala, to whisper stories into his ear about the massacres of 1977-1986 in which she perished (88). She arrives because "the bones have been shut-up shut-out and the dead will have their return willy-nilly, like a carnival in the moment just before I fall to sleep at night" (288). The man's refusal of the "bones" of his mother's five phrases prompts a representative from the world of the dead to return in a manner that approximates the religious celebration before the austerity of Lent. The contrast between the raucous days of carnival and the grim stories that Marta tells couldn't be more striking, but the man's comparison hinges on the similarity of their uses. As one of its major anthropologists argues, because carnival is "a celebration of release from the constraints of the social order it would attract those who are under endless pressure, the dispossesed and the oppressed" (Cohen, *Masquerade Politics* 154). The man who feels unfulfilled by his prosperous life and dissatisfied with his historical inheritance craves the freedom of his "carnival" of the imagined dead, and he imagines that the massacred dead like Marta are attracted to the gathering because they have been silenced by violence and need a venue to voice

their dispossession. Appropriately, the carnival also "generates relationships of amity even among strangers and allows forbidden excesses" (3). The visit of a massacred woman who can tell her story of genocide is a cause for celebration for the malaised man who cast off the past he inherited but couldn't embrace. Because Marta appears to the man as a contemporary voice for a living trauma, a voice immanent in but inaccessible as the five phrases, the man realizes that she "could only be a thing of my imagination" (172).

As a projection of the man's own imagination, Marta provides the man with the source material he needs to enrich his initially-slender "archive" which began with five unsatisfying phrases. Throughout the novel, the man refers to the phrases that his mother gave him with dissatisfaction. His disparaging references alternate between "five paltry phrases" and "pitiful five" (32, 60). The phrases comprise a "paltry five phrase history for a lost clan and place" and are meant to "recall [the dead] afterwards in Los Angeles" (231, 32). With the weight of preserving the legacy of all those who perished in a genocide that even the storyteller didn't survive, his mother's phrases bespeak impossibility: the task of preserving an entire "lost clan and place" is too large for five phrases to encompass and for the man to remedy. As a "history," they aren't able to encompass the entirety of what was lost in the Armenian Genocide. He believes that the phrases "did not give him the full of it, the it of it, but merely the faintly outlined heft" of the past (268). He wants to know more about the past and the phrases are only just able to mark the outlines of a huge, unwieldy story. The marks that the phrases make around the past aren't even completely legible to

the man, who sees them "faintly." In both these cases, the man describes the past with words that suggest its largesse and the phrases' inability to contain that largesse. Whether "paltry" or "pitiful," the five phrases of his mother don't satisfy the man because he believes that the phrases he inherited can never adequately capture the entire past that was lost. In other words, the man focuses his attention on the phrases' semantic content. His focus on the words of the phrases that describe a lost people from a lost time inevitably leads him to bemoan their inability to capture the whole picture. He wants more from the phrases because the content in them is unsatisfactorily too little. The man's imagination invents a helpmeet for him: he "half-listened for years to his mother's phrases and then notlistened and then forgot them, for years, until you arrived, Marta, […]: girl from the ether, made of ether also" (245-246). If the bones of the man's inheritance were dissatisfying because they were "pitiful," "paltry," and "bare," using his analogic imagination to create Marta and her stories "from the ether" of the past could provide him with meat to add to them.

With Marta's arrival, the man realizes that he has to convert his beliefs about the phrases from merely feeling them as a lack to feeling the lack of them. In an early scene, the man begins to deplore the meager knowledge he has of the past by saying "I am a man who would like to know better than I do," only to be interrupted mid-sentence by a parenthetical comment from Marta: "(you are whispering in my ear: it has not been for lack of knowing, and the five phrases of your inheritance, man?)" (47, 47). Though the man thinks that he doesn't know about his heritage or even the various other terrible events of history he

mentions in his Books, Marta reminds him to look into the five phrases he had been given by his mother.[61] She points to the phrases because she wants the man to realize that the phrases he had cast aside as "paltry" are the key to the man's goal of "knowing better" than he does. If the man's problem with the phrases centers on his belief that they are not enough, that they were never a complete and stable inheritance, Marta challenges him to rethink his damning judgments. She encourages the man to appreciate the phrases for providing him with a kind of "knowing" of the past. With this encouragement to embrace the phrases along with Marta's own stories, the man's imagination transforms his inexplicable malaise to a justified sadness.

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Once the man feels a sadness that is no longer malaise, he can open wide the emotional "portal [he] made in History" by expanding his "archive" (188). Through the portal, the man listens to Marta as she vocalizes sadness, pictures the fact of violence, demands the attention of conscience, and reveals the man's entailments to a sentient and principled self-definition.

Marta tells her story in order to give voice to the sadness of the massacred victim. Through Marta, the man learns of the physical deprivation of the Guatemalan massacres. Marta tells the man that, while hiding from the Guatemalan Army in the Cuchumatanes Mountains for fifteen months, the

[61] Some of those terrible events of history that the man mentions in his Books include the following: the Armenian Genocide, the lynching of an African American man as documented in a photograph, the Guatemalan massacres, the death of Hektor in the Trojan War, the colonization of the Los Angeles Basin by Spanish explorers, and the Lebanese Civil War.

"children and the old men the women and all of us colder, hungrier, […] the days of cold of hunger of we are sick do not make the hours move and although the mountain saved us, it did not save all of us, and the dead there unburied" (100). Marta describes the bitter cold of the mountains, where not much beyond potatoes can grow.[62] She describes how the women, children, and old men—"old" men because the young had already been executed by the Army for being subversive Communist sympathizers—became so hungry on the mountains that they ate grass and roots to sustain them.[63] The deprivation took its toll, as many of the escaped victims couldn't withstand the conditions and died on the mountain without a proper burial. Marta hammers home her message of deprivation by the way she tells it in a run-on sentence that has no expected end—she continues to list their deprivations in the next lines, where her

[62] According to the geographers Michael Steinberg and Matthew Taylor who studied the agricultural activities on the Cuchumatanes Mountain range, "All our informants were still involved in potato production, and 21 were involved in sheep ranching (at various scales). The harsh environment of the high plateau in the Cuchumatanes simply cannot support other forms of agriculture" (260).

[63] Numerous documents recently released by the National Security Administration (NSA) document the brutal targeting of civilian Ixil populations by anti-communist forces in Guatemala. See National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 11, "U.S. POLICY IN GUATEMALA, 1966-1996," by Kate Doyle and Carlos Osorio for specific documents outlining the operations in Guatemala. Document 14, "Counterinsurgency Operations in El Quiché," a secret cable from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sent February 1982 which describes how a "sweep operation" was implemented with the goal to "destroy all towns and villages which are cooperating wit the guerrilla army of the poor (EGP) and eliminate all sources of resistance" (Central Intelligence Agency 1). With total destruction as the goal, the army "found that most of the villages [had] been abandoned before the military forces arrive[d]" (Central Intelligence Agency 2). With the belief that "an empty village is assumed to have been supporting the EGP, […] it is destroyed," "there are hundreds, possibly thousands, of refugees in the hills with no homes to return to" (Central Intelligence Agency 2).

structure mirrors an observation she made that, on the harsh mountain, nothing makes "the hours move" (100). Her words drag on as time draws itself out in torturous physical deprivations.

Marta and her family endured terrible physical deprivations on the mountain, but none of these deprivations were as devastating as the destruction of family feeling. On the mountain, when "the men said that the children do not contribute, when they said without saying it that we must take these bones of our dead and close the crying mouths of our youngest boys and girls (which bring the Cessna A37-B onto our heads; bombs) […]. The children were died, or killed, or abandoned up in the mountain and more bones only made more bones" (100). Hunger and deprivation weren't the only killers on the mountain. Because the group of escapees were pursued by the Army with light attack aircraft the entire fifteen months they found refuge on the mountain, any sound loud enough to catch the attention of the slow-flying aircraft developed to be used on guerrilla forces in Vietnam's jungles would mean bombings.[64] The men in Marta's group see the children as doubly unnecessary—the children's cries of hunger draw the Army's bombs to them, and the children cannot contribute to the meager supply of foodstuffs that the group could find on the mountain. To the men, the unsaid solution to the problems the children cause on the precarious mountain is to get rid of them. Though they never say it, the men force the

[64] According to aviation experts, though light attack aircraft could fly in narrow and treacherous terrain, they still relied "on vulnerable, relatively immobile ground units for initial detection of irregular forces" that used the typical means of visual and aural detection of enemy combatants (Rath 106).

women into killing their own children with their own malnourished hands. Because the situation is so painful for Marta to recount, in her description here, she cannot bring herself to say outright that she was one of the ones who snuffed out the sound of the crying children. Instead, she uses passive forms like "were died," "killed," and "abandoned" without naming the actor of the sentence. Further, she pushes responsibility away by using a synecdoche, where bones stand in for the bodies of the reluctant, murderous mothers and the unsuspecting, murdered children. With this obfuscation, Marta signals that the mountain erased the maternal instinct and the family ties of those that were hiding on it. Her sentence structure, which moves from concrete with "the children" to abstract with "bones," reflects the disintegration of family structures in response to mounting pressure to survive in a terrible situation. She continues to describe her experience of the massacre by telling the man about what happened before a small number of Ixil ran into the mountains. The reason why there were only old men on the mountain lies in the sad fact that "the old men of the village dug the burial pit (my father also)" and "the father was made to kill his son, the brother his brother, made by fear" (100, 101). Forced to dig a pit that they thought was meant for them, the old men instead were "made by fear" of the Army to kill their own relatives and bury them in the pit. The massacre that pushed Marta to kill her own child in order to save others had forced her own father to destroy his family, too. At all stages of the massacre, the Guatemalan Army rent Ixil families apart, often by forcing the hands of mothers and fathers.

Along with the physical deprivation and the dissolution of families, the final description Marta gives the man expands his knowledge of the massacres to include what came before the destruction. Marta says "and yet there is more than this—our own sweet tongue and the beauty of the girls who run laughing, and I look around the room and the room is filled, in the old days, with all of my mother and father's children, the eight of us like a sword for what was possible in the future" (101). Collectively, the family was "a sword for what was possible in the future" because they were made into the Army's unlikely mercenaries, paying for the chance to stay alive by killing their own family members. But the sword could cut both ways: Marta's reminiscences preserve her family's full and sweet social world, too, though she realizes that some of her family members—herself included—were forced to contribute to its destruction. She praises her people's individuated branch of Mayan language, a language that broke off from Eastern Mayan sometime between 300 and 650 AD that is currently spoken by roughly 50,000 villagers in the northern region of Guatemala.[65] She wistfully describes the "beauty" of the "girls who run laughing," likely because the running she did during the massacres was not accompanied by laughter, but by an intense fear and desperation. Marta heightens the destruction that the community was forced to inflict on itself by positively describing the time before

[65] For individuation information, refer to page 5 of J. Kathryn Josserand and Nicholas A. Hopkins's "Chol Ritual Language." For speaker information, refer to page 330 of Thomas E. Lengyel's "Toward a Dialectology of Ixil Maya: Variation across Communities and Individuals."

the massacres. In her description of the deprivations and deaths of the massacres, Marta voices the victim's devastating sadness.

Marta's vocalization of sadness primes the man to visualize the violences that she endured. Throughout the novel, she demands that the man "see" what he couldn't before. When describing her torture in the basement of the Polytechnic School in Guatemala's capital city, Marta implores the man to "See her lovely wrists the long brown hands with vein-ridges like covered rivers upon the skin see her smile the browneyed look of sadness it is a fragile thing, you think, so easily rent, so easily turned aside (no blackened cheekbones); see how shame despair pain can be made as easily as dough or maize cakes" (180). Marta also uses visual orders, repeating "see" thrice here, to force the man into imagining the scenes she describes. She wants him to imagine how her wrists look as they are bound, how the "vein-ridges" bulge like hidden, covered rivers which course more vigorously as her blood pressure rises.[66] She wants him to imagine her facial expressions at various moments during her torture. She wants him to imagine her "browneyed look of sadness" that her torturers just as quickly tear off her face by mutilating her face and removing her bruised cheeks. She wants the man to imagine the combined emotions of "shame despair pain" in visual terms by likening the forced creation of her emotional states to the creation of Guatemalan foods, the corn or dough cakes she used to make with the very hands she asks him to imagine. She wants the man to imagine the emotional

[66] Covered, hidden rivers are another recurrent image of the novel. The man is obsessed with the Los Angeles River's previously verdant and lively banks that were concreted up and hidden below the city's streets.

roller coaster that she experiences during her torturous time at the Polytechnic School. At heart, she wants the man to *see* her.

Visualizing the violence of massacre allows Marta to make demands to conscience. Her focus on seeing might stem from a crucial historical fact of the Guatemalan massacres that the man comes to realize through Marta's telling. During the entire time that Marta and her Ixil people were being persecuted, Marta wonders "And who wouldn't save the innocent? a child? our thousand children who die already in Acul Nebaj Chajul Cotzal Xix? Why is there no one to see us? *Why are we, as ourselves, so invisible?* Don't the Christian nations arrive on a steed; we are Christians; see our pink and blue churches" (161, emphasis in original). Marta's questions here point to her anger that no international powers halted the slaughter of thousands of innocent people, especially children, who were killed in Mayan villages around Guatemala. Marta thinks it worse that her people's suffering was never even seen by the international community. The italicized phrase, taken from Jennifer Harbury's 1995 collection of survivor testimony from the Guatemalan massacres, *Bridge of Courage*, highlights the absolute invisibility of Marta's indigenous people.[67] No one stopped their losses, no one acknowledged their massacre. In her questions, Marta demands the attention that her experience deserved.

Marta's demands to conscience encourage the man to see how he, too, is entailed by the past to be both sentient and principled. In his final Book, the man

[67] The quote appears on page 79 of Harbury's book, in a section narrated by a Guatemalan revolutionary named Gabriel.

tells Marta that "He is half-Armenian, which could be something like five phrases in the place of origin and a language and a knowing (of the old places and desert marches to the Der Zor) in his blood, of who he is was may have been: not adrift, not always alone, entailed by his blood—o sorrow, he was given it by his mother, despair for her children like an amulet, like the five phrases pulled from her mouth" (268). The five phrases bestow the man with certain inalienable possessions, such as a community, a people, a place. They ground the man in something beyond himself, since with them at his side, the man is "not always alone." They tie him to the past though before he had found them lacking in their ability to tie him to anything. They imbue him with "a knowing" of the place his ancestors inhabited in Anatolia and of the forced marches through the Deir al-Zor desert that likely killed his grandmother's family. They shed light on the man's own life, giving him knowledge of the tangled web of "who he is was may have been" as a result of realizing the ancestral history that is a part of him.

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The analogic imagination transforms self-recognition into animating internalized truths about the relation of sentience to conscience. These truths include the power of synecdoche, the invention of an auditor, the skepticism of the image, the self-stereotyping of popular media, and the creation of a genocidally-hybrid self-defining narrative.

By exercising his analogic imagination, the man comes to understand that collapsing larger things into smaller ones can generate a great expansion of comprehension. At heart, the appearance of Marta and the knowledge the man

gains from her about the world at large is a definitive example of the power of using the small to understand the large. He summarizes their relationship with the story of "my memory of my mother recalling her mother (two of her five) divides, abates, disappears back down into the river, until later you appear to me: demanding, irascible, handless and tired. And I began to remember?" (155). After imagining a scene where he travels down to Marta's capital, Guatemala City, and hears an elderly Guatemalan woman saying two of his mother's five phrases ("They came for my father in the middle of the night. We never saw him again."), the man still cannot hold on to the phrases of the past (154-155). He says that his memory of the phrases "divides, abates, disappears" back down to the river of his memory after this imagined scene. His memory might have divided because it cannot hold the two different women (the elderly Guatemalan woman, the man's Armenian grandmother) whose very similar memories it preserves together in tension. In this reading, the man's mind becomes a finite battleground for the memories of others—he has room for only so many, and the memories of the elderly Guatemalan can't be held together with his grandmother's memories though the memories are so very similar.[68] Perhaps the man's memory "divides" because he cannot keep his attention on both at the same time. In this sense, his memory "abates" because he loses focus. Instead of sharpening the image of his grandmother, the man's imagined scene with the elderly Guatemalan woman diminishes the power of his grandmother's

[68] This could be related to what Michael Rothberg has called "competitive memory" in his seminal book, *Multidirectional Memory*.

transferred memories. The two stories compete for the man's attention, and it becomes too much for the man to handle. The memory "disappears" under the pressure. But even as the memory disappears into the man's consciousness, the singular figure of Marta arrives and demands that he remember and see it in another light. She appears to the man, "demanding, irascible, handless and tired," an imagined victim of the Guatemalan massacres who tells him about her experience so that he can enliven the traumatic pasts of Anatolia and of Guatemala (155). She provides a center for his imagination to do the enlivening work he could not do otherwise in his overwhelmed state. Marta allows the man to collapse, productively and not just simplistically, the experience of a victim such that when he is able to understand her experience, he can better understand the others he could not grasp before. In knowing the one, he can better know the others.

Collapsing meaning in a singular figure like Marta proves helpful to the man especially in his desire to be heard. The man's analogic imagination invents an invaluable auditor for him. Reflecting on his luck, he asks Marta:

> How I would speak with the dead—for what purpose: for company, perhaps, accompaniment, because the whiskeys and girls and highs and Shows make this small space where you could reside, come in and speak with me, tell me whence I come and to where to what I might travel; speak me and speak to me; […] and seeing and a slight knowing of what has been and before the sorrow river can overtake me, kill me, deaden me, you take my hand and walk with me in the mountains, whisper in my ear of what is possible and you are with me, holding my ephemeral hands (265)

The man assumes that speaking with the dead is a questionable endeavor and one that must be justified. The action is most significant because it provides the man with someone who listens to him—Marta. The entertainments and pleasures available in the man's life cannot do what Marta does since they are meant to distract him. With Marta as auditor, the man gains a confidante, a helpmeet, a travel guide, a savior, a creator. This companion is a great source of emotional strength for the man who would drown in his "sorrow river" without her to hear his cries. Her hand-holding saves him so that he may think (in the absence of crude entertainments) and feel (without feeling alone).

With the company of an auditor, the man could reassess his relationship to the entertainments he had enjoyed mindlessly before. His analogical imagination reveals that he should be skeptical of the images that he consumes. Marta's exhortations to "see" her force the man to come to terms with why she had been invisible and why he hadn't been able to see her previously. Initially, the man's life in Los Angeles bars him from understanding what Marta recounts. As he sits in front of his television, he tells Marta that "I cannot bear to see it; I'll watch TV and not see it; there are no pictures on the television of Acul that day or yesterday or fifteen years from now: you are never in the news, darling; in the Shows" (171). Neither Marta nor her fellow Ixil people were depicted on screen for the man to see in the 1980s, and they are certainly not on the network television shows (capitalized because they are the man's main entertainment) that the man watches fifteen years later as he writes his Books. The man points to a few problems he encounters when trying to visualize Marta's story. First, the

scenes Marta describes are unlike the ones he's seen on television; second, the scenes are too hard to imagine without any models; and third, television easily distracts the man into ignoring the scenes that Marta asks the man to visualize. Without the help of television to help the man know about the Guatemalan massacres, the man knows nothing about them before the imaginary figure, Marta, came to speak to him. And yet, television also allows the man an easy exit out of her story. But, through the operation of his analogical imagination, the man shifts from excusing his behavior to criticizing it. In a long list of the things he's come to learn about her experience because she came to tell him about them, the man admits that "there are the mountains and there is the neighbor girl you carried on your back and the boy you carried in your belly and the child whose hand you held dragging her running up the mountains, and there are more and there is more (a palm which kills your son nine months later; a breast which cannot save Doña Ana's boy five months after that (the milkless worthless titty)), and I couldn't see it, Marta, and I was watching the television" (247). During the time of the Guatemalan massacres of 1977-1986, the man was busy watching TV and paid no mind to events that were not a part of his regularly-scheduled programs. But, when Marta arrives to speak to the man fifteen years later, the man has a chance to see what he couldn't before. In fact, the list he provides of the tortures that Marta endured while he was being entertained at home reflects the man's newfound concern about "seeing" the suffering of others. Each item in the man's list evokes cinematic scenes that might be filmed for a movie. The man cuts from a shot of mountains to a shot of Marta carrying a wounded refugee to

close-ups of her hand holding her child's, the same hand snuffing out a life, and a breast unable to provide sustenance. If earlier, the man had refused to see Marta's scenes of suffering, the cinematic shots of this scene allow the man to make up for the lack of similar images on his television screen and speak to the importance of "seeing" the past passionately remembered in the present through an imaginative visual recreation in the mind. His skeptical assessment of television images opened up the space in his mind for him to imagine Marta's experience.

The man's realizations about the images he sees on screen lead him to recognize that we stereotype ourselves, a process simply reproduced in our popular media. The man comes to this new insight a hundred pages before he writes the cinematic description I discuss above when he tells Marta, "We'll movie you up if you are dead, darling, there is no doubt that I could write a movie about you, a small and censored love story which will not show your hands—brown and tired and blooded and boned and removed—covering the mouths of babes in the mountains, these invisible uncinematic wounds, or how they are removed later with a coffee cutting implement, and untenable for the telling in America" (140). Here, the man proposes a movie about Marta's experience, but the proposed movie's plot revolves around a conventional love story between the man and Marta. He believes that he would never be able to write scenes that include Marta's hand, hands that were agents of death for the screaming children who would give away their hidden location in the mountains, hands that were severed later by her Guatemalan Army torturers in

the Polytechnic School. The man's hesitation to visually describe how Marta endures and makes "invisible uncinematic wounds" is slowly chipped away after the man writes two more Books filled with increasingly more cinematic descriptions of Marta's experience. In the latter description of Marta's hands discussed above, the man's focus on visual representation aligns with the man's newly acquired visual knowledge of the Guatemalan massacres as a result of his imaginary visits with Marta. By his own admission, he hadn't been able to see (or even visually describe) Marta's suffering before because he was busy being a stereotypical American watching television shows, but his cinematic list reveals that he *can* move beyond that initial shortcoming to see her experience. The stereotypes that the man uncovers are the ones reproduced in the popular media he consumes.

The man becomes well-provisioned to learn and implement the last "truth" he gains from his analogic imagination. This "truth" is that there is great existential worth in creating a genocidally-hybrid self-defining narrative. After the man learns of the physical deprivation of Marta's people, he can begin imagining similar circumstances that his ancestors might have endured in the Armenian Genocide. If Marta's people ate grass in the mountains, the man surmises, maybe his ancestors did as well. He imagines that his grandmother's "young mother ate the old grasses of the Der Zor in the summer 1915 in a different war" (252). He adds to the story that he inherited by imagining what might have happened to his grandmother's kin when they were "sent on the march to the Der Zor" (268). Knowing nothing about what they experienced, the

man assumes they might have experienced something much like what Marta experienced during her exile on the desolate Cuchumatanes Mountains. In fact, the man intuits that the two situations have so much in common, he purposefully mixes them up at times. While addressing Marta, the man tells her, "trudging up into the hills and looking seeking the day long for some small kind of edible fruit or green plants because you are always hungry, you ate grass in the Mesopotamian desert stories of summer 1915, will eat anything offered you, […] while the bombs rained down on your head from the Cessna A37-B" (283). Though the man begins the sentence addressing Marta, the sentence he speaks muddles his addressee halfway through. The beginning aligns with the story the man has heard from Marta: it describes Marta's deprivation on the mountains, since she is "trudging up into the hills" and looking for food. But the man slips into another description, of his ancestors in the Armenian Genocide, in the next part of his address. He says that she "ate grass in the Mesopotamian desert stories of summer 1915," clearly locating his addressee in the Deir al-Zor desert of the Middle East during the Armenian Genocide. The man might have shifted to addressing his ancestors here, but the rest of the sentence complicates this reading. The man continues to add to the sentence, saying that the previous parts of the sentence all happened "while the bombs rained down on your head from the Cessna A37-B." As we heard earlier, Marta named the aircraft, the Cessna A37-B, that terrorized the Ixil who had taken to the hills for protection from the Guatemalan Army.[69] Further, the Cessna A37-B was not manufactured until 1967,

[69] See Marcom 100.

so this particular reference to the aircraft in the man's address cannot historically refer to his own ancestors.[70] The sentence, then, is an example of the man's belief that the connection between the deprivation of Marta's experience and of his own ancestors is so strong that they might be justifiably conflated.

The strength of the analogy between the Guatemalan and Armenian massacres allows the man to see connections between the dissolution of family structures during both historical events. The man's inherited phrases actually preserve much information already about how the Armenian Genocide affected the man's grandmother's family life. "She never saw them again" repeats twice, to refer separately to the grandmother's father and her mother and sisters. But even these seemingly simple phrases can be expanded with knowledge the man gained about Marta's massacre. In Marta's case, she explained that the perpetrators of genocide forced the hand of their victims to destroy their own families. With this knowledge of Marta's experience in mind, the man imagines that

> I can see my own grandmother who stands at the window of her home in Kharphert, Turkey, it is the summer 1915, sees her mother and sisters and cousins walk by her on the deportation march to the Der Zor, those whom she could not save, for whom the gods did not intervene (the husband stands behind her, pleads, 'Please,' he says to her, 'we can do nothing for them'; waves their French national papers in front of her nose, their two passes, like tickets for a solitary ride) (140).

[70] See the U.S. Air Force Fact Sheets on CESSNA A-37 DRAGONFLY, CESSNA A-37B, and CESSNA A-37A for more information. They can be found on the National Museum of the United States Air Force website.

In this imagined scene, the man appends the phrases he inherited with a scene of his surviving grandmother feeling guilty for sending her family to their deaths while she and her husband saved themselves by leaving the country with foreign passports. Like Marta whose shame at killing her own children doesn't allow her to name the actor of her children's death, the man's imagined grandmother feels great shame for abandoning her family to go on a "solitary ride" to safety in Lebanon. The man even imagines how his grandmother's shame further affected her life in Beirut. In a parenthetical aside after the scene where the grandmother and the grandfather allow family members to be taken away, the man thinks: "And later in the Lebanon she cannot forgive the husband who could not save her mother and sisters (a coward, she thought)" (140). Years after the genocide, the grandmother thinks of her own husband as part of the reason why her family perished. Though not a literal destruction of family by murder, the grandmother's negative opinion of her husband as "a coward" destroys the marital love that might have existed between them. In this extension of the analogy, the man adds to the family dissolution that genocides can bring by imagining effects on surviving populations. With Marta's experience to guide his analogies, the man can add to the phrases he inherited and enrich them with imagined description.

The man also begins to add to the phrases by imagining the rich life pre-genocide that his grandmother might have lost as Marta had. If Marta remembered the language and the laughter of her life before the Army descended on her village, the man imagines "an ancient city where my

grandmother once walked the dirt paths and played in the shadows of the seventeenth century maple tree, a girl who saw her town ruined" (286). Like Marta's scene of domestic bliss with laughing girls, the man's imagined scene of his grandmother in her hometown of Kharphert in Eastern Anatolia has a girl at play. Both scenes highlight the levity of life before violence. And both also highlight the long-standing claim each subjugated population had to their homes for centuries. In Marta's telling, the Ixil language marks the claim, since it has been spoken in the same general area of Guatemala for centuries.[71] The city of Kharphert in the man's imagined version of his grandmother's life pre-genocide makes two references to the long history the Armenian villagers had in the area. The city is "ancient" and the maple tree under which his grandmother plays was planted in the seventeenth century. The man further extends his comparison between Marta's and his ancestors' histories by excitedly telling Marta about "the artifacts we could find together: baskets bowls painted tombstones the stela and stone grave markers in Anatolia in the jungles of the Péten" (300). The man and Marta can find artifacts in their respective places of origin: Anatolia for the man, and the Péten for Marta. Both geographic terms are the historic names for regions now called something else: "Turkey" replaced "Anatolia," "Guatemala" replaced "Péten."[72] The man joins himself and Marta across time and space here. He also

[71] See page 5 of J. Kathryn Josserand and Nicholas A. Hopkins's "Chol Ritual Language."
[72] See William L. Rathje's "The Origin and Development of Lowland Classic Maya Civilization" for renaming of the Péten. See Kerem Öktem's "The Nation's Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponymes in Republican

joins the artifacts syntactically by omitting the commas needed between them. The list of artifacts starts with items used in daily life ("baskets bowls") and ends with artifacts made to commemorate the dead ("painted tombstones the stela and stone grave markers"). This progression could reflect the man's beliefs about the artifacts' creation: his ordered list of unpunctuated artifacts might highlight their continuous creation in each area until violent upheaval disrupted their creation. Using Marta's people's experience as an inspiration, the man fills in the stories of his ancestors' prior lives hidden in the five phrases he inherited. He creates a genocidally-hybrid story that helps him define his own alignments with himself and with others.

The genocidally-hybrid narrative inspires the man's realization of the relation between sentience and conscience. He admits to Marta that "There is nothing more terrible than this story you are relating, its cover-ups" by both Guatemalan and United States governments (253). Further, the man realizes that "when the Army said that they hadn't done it: they equipped with the UH-1H helicopters, the Cessna A37-B, computer keyboards, telephones, Galils—they are writing Guatemalan History (and the victors wrote their History of Turkey also, undid the Armenians there[])" (192). Marta allows the man to see that the weapons and machinery the Guatemalan Army used against its own people were sold to them by the US government after an embargo against selling arms

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Turkey" and Emrullah Bayrak's "Official Changes to Turkish Place Names Sometimes a Hard Sell" for shirking "Anatolian" names in favor of Turkish ones.

to the country suspected of human rights violations was lifted in 1983.[73] Based on what Marta told him about the denial of the Guatemalan massacres, the man understands that his own ancestors' deaths were also denied. The man connects the fact that the Guatemalan Army denied that they had done anything other than protect the country from traitorous troops of Communist sympathizers with the fact that the Turkish government actively promoted Turkification of Eastern Anatolia after the Armenian Genocide to deny Armenians any claim to the area they had inhabited for centuries.[74] In both cases, a subjugated population is written out of History and denied recognition of their losses. This comparison between the two populations allows the man to remember something from his own personal history that extends the relation. The man remembers that, like Marta, "he too unfolio'd in America, the disavowed god in things and the dead of before, and he has not found it in the books, in shops, behind closed doors, in ledgers (*Armenian? Massacres?*)" (268, emphasis in original). The man's

[73] For more information on US involvement in the Guatemalan massacres, see Document 14 by the Central Intelligence Agency and Bernard Gwertzman's article for the *New York Times* about the lifting of the embargo. President Reagan's comments at a meeting in December 1982 with Guatemala's President at the time, General Efraín Ríos Montt, covered up the massacres that the CIA had informed the Administration about by assuring listeners that Ríos Montt was "a man of great personal integrity and commitment. His country is confronting a brutal challenge from guerrillas armed and supported by others outside Guatemala" (Reagan). For further information on Guatemalan denial, see Debra H. Rodman's "Forgotten Guatemala: Genocide, Truth, and Denial in Guatemala's Oriente."

[74] For information on Turkification after the Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923, see Joost Jongerden's *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War* and Kerem Öktem's "The Nation's Imprint: Demographic Engineering and the Change of Toponymes in Republican Turkey."

parenthetical aside here reveals what might have happened to him when he visited a bookstore to ask if they carried any books about the Armenian Genocide. In answer to his inquiry, the bookstore employee expresses confusion about who the Armenians are. The second question of "Massacres?" reveals another confusion. Instead of "genocide" as the man might have expected given his family's experience, he's met with "massacres," delivered again as a question. A possible reference to the Library of Congress's categorization system which files books about the Armenian Genocide under "Armenian massacres, 1915-1923," the question shows the man that he can't find what he is looking for behind the phrases in books that cannot recognize the Armenian Genocide as a genocide in their classification.[75] The man's ancestors' stories aren't in the books he has encountered, but Marta's stories are a way into them. Marta's experience of denial helps the man see the present reality of his people's own denied genocide.

As Marta's related stories of denial forced the man into remembering that he had forgotten how his efforts at finding out more about the Armenian Genocide from books were met with disappointment, so too, does Marta's experience force the man into acknowledging another hard truth: that of the underlying justification of genocide by its perpetrators. Marta had already told

[75] Armenian scholars have reached similar insights in their work. Marc Nichanian, for example, has posited that all archival material of the Armenian Genocide is put to the service of proving the genocide occurred in the face of denial, a task which demeans the documents and testimonies to the burden of proof. See his *The Historiographic Perversion*, translated from the original French, for details.

the man that the Guatemalan Army "*killed us like dogs*" (266-267, emphasis in original). He knew that Marta's people had been slaughtered like animals. But in extending Marta's experience to his own ancestors' experience, the man achieves another realization. In this comparison, the man hears:

> a thousand year Ixil girl who says to the soldiers in Spanish that *We are not dogs*. In my language which is not my mother's tongue I listen across the mountains, your foreign words fall into the tympanum, down the river reveries, these dream-cities, razed nightmares (burnt) villages—We also were not dogs, we also would have liked a slow siesta in the mid afternoon haze beneath the Anatolian skies of Kharphert […].
>
> Now I know it, what I have always known and not wanted to (know) remember that: we have been dogs, darling, you and I: Armenian Ixil curs; and a thousand years of history can be burnt, can be razed. (185, emphasis in original)

The man hears Marta's story of how she refused the categorization she and her fellow Ixil villagers had been given by the Guatemalan army forces that had been sent to decimate them. She refuses to be a "dog" by their dehumanizing definitions. The man hears Marta's words (said not in Marta's native language, Ixil, but in Spanish, the language of the conquerors) across time and space. He can understand them despite the language barrier between them (she speaks Spanish here, he hears English "which is not [his Armenian] mother's tongue") because they fall directly into his eardrum, which transfers sounds to the inner ear and on to the brain. Marta's phrase reaches the man despite the many linguistic barriers and forces him to see the connection between Marta's experience and the experience that was preserved in the phrases that he inherited. Marta's experience reminds him so strongly of his own grandmother's

that he even asks Marta, "Are you my grandmother?" (276). Again, the analogy seems so strong to the man that he cannot help but see the two women as one.

In creating the genocidally-hybrid narrative above, the man makes realizations about his own conscience. He realizes that he pushed Marta's story and his own family's story away because:

> This the sad truth of it, of us,—Marta. That the damned exiled races (now roam these Americas) care no more for the damned unexiled races of these Americas than Priam's dogs for their master's corpse. And for this I am sorry and bereaved even; for what is us, human I suppose, that does not make a man more likely or likely to love another and hated man if he—this man in the deserts of Mesopotamia in the mountains of Guatemala—has known pain and sorrow and the soldier's cut and fist upon his brow: compassion is not the child of suffering. (282)

He realizes that although his family's violent subjugation should have made him more attentive to the subjugation of others, "compassion is not the child of suffering" (282). In seeing how the "damned exiled races" that immigrated to America to escape persecution do not feel for the suffering of the "damned unexiled races" of the indigenous Americans, the man realizes that there's something horribly wrong. They're both "damned," but they don't see the similarities. Further, the man makes a comparison between Priam's dogs who inadvertently drink the blood of their own master and the victimized populations who don't see that they have more in common than in difference. In his comparison, the man makes the implicit argument that both Priam and the unexiled indigenous populations are done a disservice by those who forget them: Priam's body is desecrated and the indigenous populations are massacred with nary a peep from those whose own ancestors had been the victims of racial

violence. It is this problem that the man ends up solving in seeing Marta, hearing her story, and forging connections between her experience and his own grandmother's. The man proudly claims, "Marta, I refused, finally, the mean separateness of things. Of every thing for this modern: the mind his laughs and loves machines, his grandmother in Turkey then Lebanon, and an Ixil girl in Acul then Guatemala City and how he feels thinks" (304). He realizes that asserting the differences between the massacres is "mean" because it's both callous and intellectually lazy. He sees that there's much he can understand (in both how he "feels" and "thinks," conjoined here in his phrasing) if he sees the connections between them. He can intellectually understand that "here and there and here and there it is the same" (243).[76] If he is able to feel for Marta and her losses, his conscience would be invigorated. Fortunately for the man, he achieves this invigoration through his analogic imagination which revives Marta's losses and his grandmother's losses such that his feelings of sadness translate into a conscience to be exercised. By the end of the many analogies the man makes between Marta's story and his own family's, the man realizes that the foreign can be familiar, too. In feeling so strongly for Marta and her losses, the man comes to

[76] The man's "feels thinks" can be something like the Latin word, *sentire*, which literally means "think feel."

The man's realization that the massacred can commiserate and find solidarity in their shared experiences offers a solution for a problem Michael Rothberg brings up in *Multidirectional Memory*, where he talks about the battle over attention between "competing" memories. There is no battle if the rememberer feels solidarity for the other whose memories he takes along with his own.

feel for the phrases he had inherited by analogizing between the two genocides. In the man's case, his sentience led to the invigoration of his conscience.

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The man comes to realize that sentience undergirds conscience in the analogies he makes. The realization leads him to understand that he had not been living life the way a conscionable man should and that his analogical imagination had shown him the way out. It is this profound takeaway that the man wants his own readers to understand and to live by.

If earlier in the novel, the man deplored his undefinable and unidentifiable "malaise" and "maladie," his experience of analogizing from Marta's experience offers him an alternative way of living (252). In a single axiomatic takeaway, the man asserts that "to see the dead is to remember that I am alive" (310). The man begins *truly* living and appreciating his life after he passionately remembers as a result of his analogizing from Marta's experience. Only after spending time with Marta does the man feel that "an Ixil girl made this boy real, I could turn the TV on off, and sit with you awhile longer in my house" (289). The deadening effects of the perpetually cheery Shows that the man watched to tune out Marta's story no longer have any sway over him. In fact, he now seeks the low emotions he had been scared of before. "Let us speak of your brother. Let us speak of your mother," he says, "This pains me and I am glad (happy!) for this pain, a sadness like a cancer" (300). For the man, choosing to feel pain instead of ignoring and denying it though it might eventually consume him like a metastasized cancer is preferable to living in a false,

saccharine comfort. Without Marta to steer him away from the Shows and into a place where he can instead see connections between his painful past and the pasts of others, the man isn't fully living his life.

The man knows that his life is worth living because he lives with knowledge of the past now. And along with that newly discovered knowledge of the past, the man realizes that he knows how he and others can remake the world for the better. In remembering Marta and his own grandmother, the man gained knowledge of the solidarity of subjugated populations. This knowledge, too, carries with it a political correlative, that:

> Perhaps you can never entirely hide the blood, Marta, or bind what cannot hold—it cannot be erased, the nation-state dream has its leaks and holes and interstitial lives, rivers: we are here, we have survived, and the half-Armenian boy, the Ixil girl, are blooded now, bolder now that we can know it, that I have known you: see my nene in the sunlight, her glorious brown hair; see my corpse and her yellow teeth—they have lost their hair and teeth in my dream and I awake and think that I can hear children in the back of the house: they are laughing; they are playing. (278)

The man's understanding of the similarities between Ixil and Armenian allowed him to passionately remember both pasts such that he and Marta are "blooded" with life where before they had none—the man was "dead" because he was lulled into a stupor by American television, Marta was dead because she had been killed during the Guatemalan massacres and because her death was denied after the fact. The man realizes that in making himself and the past come alive, he resists the homogenizing assimilation of the nation-state which erases all traces of the past in favor of "binding what cannot hold": its own glorified story of progress which ignores all those who were in the way. Like the Historical

Materialist of Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History," the man comes to realize that viewing the past anew opens up the possibility of forging new futures from their examples. Benjamin's "historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past" by "blast[ing] open the continuum of history" instead of subscribing to a teleological narrative favored by Traditional Historicists (Benjamin 262). As David L. Eng and David Kazanjian astutely point out in their discussion of the Historical Materialist, the work of Benjamin's heroic figure hinges on "a creative process, animating history for future significations as well as alternate empathies" (Eng & Kazanjian 1). This belief is echoed in the novel's epigraph, an Ixil phrase, "lakoj oon ve't uma't u ak'la tiichajil tetz u tenam Ixil," a phrase that is best translated as "Maybe now a new future will not arrive for the Ixil" (*Draining the Sea* i).[77] The phrase suggests that the potential of the past can be used to change the future. The epigraph rejects the "new future" which disrupted centuries of development and life for the indigenous Ixil. Instead, the phrase promotes a future built out of the past as imagined in the present, which is not "new" in the sense of a radical change from the promise of the past. This future lives up to the past's potential and can affect the course of the future by allowing those in the present to create new affective "empathies" from it. As the man realizes, these "alternate empathies" often include feelings that are neither merely happy nor positive. The man sees his own corpse and his nene's (his grandmother's) yellow teeth in his vision because these things that

[77] I am indebted to María Luz García, expert anthropologist on the Ixil in Guatemala, for this translation (María Luz García, personal correspondence, 27 Feb. 2015).

mark sadness, pain, and ignorance "cannot be erased" and instead make life "bolder." The man's realization here that remembering pain doesn't necessarily mean being held down by the past has reverberations of current turns in affect theory. As Sara Ahmed reminds us, it's time to move beyond the staid notion that "Bad feelings" are "orientated toward the past, as a kind of stubbornness that 'stops' the subject from embracing the future" (50). In Ahmed's view, seeing imagined versions of the past as more than just "melancholia" means admitting that "These histories have not gone" but instead "persist[] in the present" (50). Ahmed even sees the stubborn rememberer as providing "an alternative model of the social good," one that makes claims for the value of passionately remembering painful pasts (50). The man's ability to hear the laughter of children comes after seeing his own corpse and seeing the "leaks and holes and interstitial lives" of the nation-state (*Draining the Sea* 278). The holes here are openings for resisting the complacency and amnesia of modern life with its focus on progress and forgetting the past in favor of constant improvement. It's in making the painful past a living part of the present—it's about what Sara Ahmed calls "bad feelings" and it's about what Benjamin's Historical Materialist does, too.

And the man in *Draining the Sea* wants his readers to come to these realizations alongside him. He addresses his unmarked "Reader" in his five "Books" to underscore how the dual roles of reading and writing can help forge these new affective relationships. In his apostrophic addresses, the man asserts that his experience of analogizing can be extended to the novel's readers as well.

He asks his readers: "Will you, dear Sirs Madams, take the phrases inside your crania and let them live awhile longer than Marta me, and you perchance a little less lonely today on your drives across the city?" (313). He offers his readers—the "dear Sirs Madams" of his apostrophe—his own experience of finding solidarity with another as a model for combating the loneliness of the modern man. Though his address is a formal one that echoes the salutations used in official business documents, the structure of the man's question is more intimate and underscores his message of human interaction. The two parts of the sentence rhyme, "me" with "city," making the question more singsong than demand. Further, the content of his question is one concerned with forging community, since his logic is that readers will always have company if they can allow the consciousness of the fictional characters to take up residence in their mind. When, on the last page of the novel the man ends with an exhortation to his reader, he wants his advice to become undeniable:

> the American half-Armenian boy and his Ixil girl—he half-dead and trying for life light before his own death alighted, and you? to live here for the breathy moments that I said you, and that someone, someone else in ether, reads your name. Dear Reader, please do it.
>
> *Taa*. (315, emphasis in original)

In this final passage, the man urges his readers to do as he did: to see Marta, to feel for her, and to keep her alive in their present by passionately remembering her though she is not their relation. By addressing both the Reader and Marta (the "you" of this passage) in an apostrophe, the man does as Lauren Berlant says apostrophe strives to do: it "permits subjects to suspend themselves in the

optimism of a potential occupation of the same psychic space of others, the objects of desire who make you possible (by having some promising qualities, but also by not being there)" (Berlant 26). While Berlant, per Barbara Johnson, reads apostrophe as a method for using the supposed desires of an absent other to satisfy your own personal desires, I read the man's apostrophes as emerging mainly because of unselfish reasons. I grant that the man improves his own life by addressing and imagining Marta, but the novel's final sentence here shows that he's invested in preserving Marta's story and allowing it to positively influence the lives of others. He makes clear that, in reading Marta's name in the man's final Book ("*Taa*," in Ixil), the readers call her into their lives and allow her story to affect them. As Marta's story had shown the man how he could make his life worth living, so does Marcom hopes her book will do the same for her readers. Finally, the novel's last line offers an alternative to the alienation of the present moment's "cruel optimism"—per Berlant, if the prevailing structures, beliefs, and models have only brought us disappointment yet we cling to them nonetheless because casting them off means losing our entrenched ideas of selfhood, we need a new method of interacting with the world that expands ideas of selfhood behind the individual. In a sense, the man's final exhortation to his Readers is one that calls for what Carolyn Dinshaw calls "a more just and more attached nonmodernity" (39). This is postmemory's promise—a connection with the past such that the present and the future are transformed with its passionate remembering. Marcom's decision to write the Reader into her novel

with the man's apostrophes to them highlights how intimately tied postmemory can be to the processes of reading and writing.

Interestingly enough, because in *Draining the Sea* the fictional book emerges as the method for creating these alignments, the literary is reinvested with profound meaning in the realm of postmemory and in that of progressive politics. Marcom tells the man's story with the frame that he is writing five "Books" that have a particular "Reader" he refers to explicitly. With this frame, Marcom highlights how important the twinned processes of writing and reading are to identifying with the stories of other victimized populations. She's echoed this feeling in various public talks she's given throughout the last decade. In one, Marcom argues that, with *Draining the Sea*, "I wanted in a way to collapse history in that book, make a book that collapsed space and even time and put two things side by side so that their relationship to one another could be felt and experienced. [….] And in the book these relations, I hoped, could be seen. Could be felt" (Davis-Van Atta 139). The writing of the book allowed Marcom to bring two separate pasts together such that the relationship between them could be felt by her readers who are reminded of their task by a character they encounter in Marcom's novel. The felt alignments are marshaled for the purposes of a more just and less cruel world. Fundamentally, *Draining the Sea* teaches us that sentience and conscience are intimately joined.

AFTERWORD: LITERARY STUDIES AND THE PEDAGOGY OF POSTMEMORY

In the course of my analysis of Marcom's novels, I discovered that these texts made important insights about the mediation of the imagination between memory and passionate remembering. These insights included how postmemory does its work, when it might be problematically achieved, and what its most positive outcomes can be. All along, I kept postmemory at the center of my dissertation in the field of literary studies. After stepping back to see the project as a whole, it's become obvious to me that Marcom's trilogy and my analysis of it lead to the same fundamental takeaway: literary studies is a discipline well-suited for theorizing and analyzing postmemory because it is a discipline deeply invested in and best-equipped for paying scholarly attention to the imagination's greatest feats. In fact, since imagination is the forte of literary scholars, literature departments are best suited for teaching courses centered around postmemory, as my own experience attests. In this short afterword, I explain the disciplinary utility of my dissertation by briefly summarizing Marcom's trilogy and its concerns with reading and writing. After this discussion of the trilogy's larger concerns as related to the discipline of literary studies, I add a pedagogic dimension to the utility of my project by arguing that a course centered around postmemory allows for productive, personal engagement by students with both canonical and emerging texts.

When seen together as a trilogy, Marcom's novels offer literary scholars a sustained and progressively more difficult exploration of the writerly

imagination as mediator between inherited memories and their passionate remembering in postmemory. In other words, my analysis of the trilogy reveals that Marcom increasingly highlights the importance of writing for creating postmemory and for getting others to understand it as a phenomenon. As I argued in my chapter about *Three Apples Fell from Heaven*, Marcom's storytelling vignettes allow eavesdroppers to vivify features of the past as a result of reading imagined stories of the past that contrast older pasts with a more recent past. This contrastive approach is one able to be created in the novel form, since "[t]he novel (especially, perhaps, the post-modern novel) can," by Marcom's estimation, "embrace any kind and all kinds of narratives: the historical tracts, the newspaper article, letters, myths, etc. as does *Three Apples Fell From Heaven*. It is perhaps a more-inclusive narrative than the historical one, more truthful, even, if I can be so bold" (Marcom, in Merjian 8). Novels like *Three Apples Fell from Heaven* can include documents of history yet they needn't be hemmed in by history's claim to objectivity. In the novel, Marcom's characters—notably, Rachel, Sargis, and Anaguil—decide to write down their experiences as affirmations of self in the face of historical annihilation. If the novel is unlike the books of history, it also differs from other sources it borrows from, namely, those from the oral record. While hearsay and family stories are juxtaposed with written documents and imagined scenes in Marcom's first novel, the novel does more work than the oral story can by undercutting the "official" record of a document like the "Official Proclamation" reprinted in the book that serves as source material for the murderous bootmakers that Marcom imagines releasing an

"Edict." By including both history and hearsay in her novel, Marcom creates a combined form that transcends both. The combined form of Marcom's novel is what invests unsatisfactory memories of the Armenian Genocide with personal meaning for those who want to passionately remember the past they never experienced, and it is a form that is imaginatively written. Marcom continues to focus her attention on the novel's imaginatively written form in her second and third books. In *The Daydreaming Boy*, she brings together the Lebanese Civil War and the Armenian Genocide to tell a story about an afflicted man who cannot take comfort in his own imaginative renditions of the past. Vahé's predicament of being unable to access the productive and life-affirming insights of postmemory as created in the imagination is contrasted with the situation of the man in *Draining the Sea* who explicitly engages in the imaginative process by writing five "Books." It is in the process of writing that the man learns about Marta and his ancestors' experience. And the man urges his Readers to use their imaginations to see the connections he himself realized in the writing, since he believes that "the real resides in books, where we can, finally, loafe and invite the soul" (*Draining the Sea* 313). Marcom's writing of a novel so deeply invested in the writing process affirms how the imagination can be used to create writing which itself can teach readers how to achieve postmemorial effects and affiliations. Essentially, Marcom's novels depict a wonderful feedback loop: Marcom's imagination (inspired by other written works and overheard stories) created her novels, and the novels inspire the imaginations of Marcom's readers. In its most successful creations in creative works, postmemory perpetuates its

creation in the audience. For these reasons, literary scholars are well-suited for exploring postmemory and postmemorial narratives.

I've tried to argue that literary studies is a productive venue for discussing postmemory by tracking writerly concerns in Marcom's trilogy, but I want to push this point through another context: pedagogy. My claim here is that, if postmemory can be productively discussed in literary circles, it has a great role to play in pedagogical venues as well. I can confidently make this claim because I taught a successful upper-division literature course on the topic myself at the University of Texas at Austin last summer. I titled the course "Not Even Past: Imagining Painful Histories" and promoted it on the course schedule with a description that included the class's main units anchored by texts of personal loss and historical trauma. The creative works of the authors we analyzed in the course—Russell Banks, Micheline Aharonian Marcom, Art Spiegelman, Saidiya Hartman, and Jonathan Safran Foer—were just a few of the many texts I wished I had the time to include. In making my long reading list, I realized that canonical American literature is populated with passionate rememberers. Well-known characters like William Faulkner's Quentin Compson, along with distinguished writers like Toni Morrison, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Tim O'Brien, and Cormac McCarthy, have grappled with productively making the haunting past come alive in their narratives. Amongst these giants of the canon, the mixture of canonical and less-canonical texts I chose to include on my syllabus were not the sometimes light fare of a summer course, but the class filled up quickly anyhow. On the first day, I realized why while students explained their reasons for

choosing my class from the list on offer. One student disclosed that she enrolled for the class because she noticed that we were going to study creative works on the Armenian Genocide, the genocide that her own great-grandfather had survived before settling in a border town in Mexico. Another shared that she was eager to read *Maus* so that she could understand her grandmother who fled Poland during the Holocaust but never talked about the experience. Still another said that, while growing up in the Rio Grande Valley, he had heard about the bus crash that inspired Russell Banks's *The Sweet Hereafter* and that he wanted to finally read the novel with the support of a class. These stories were just a few of the painful pasts that my students brought to our classroom, and I see them not as isolated instances, but as emblematic of the human desire to reinvigorate the past in the present through creative means. America is full of passionate rememberers like my students. The recent controversy over the confederate flag is just one instance in a long line of varied efforts to reinvigorate features of the past in the present. If my class's success and popularity is any indication of the state of postmemory, the American university and America at large need to take interest.

Postmemory as a product of the mediation of the imagination between memory and its passionate remembering is often enacted and explored in literature and literature courses, but it is at heart a reality of our contemporary moment. As time attenuates the personal connections various afflicted groups have to their ancestral traumas, postmemory will become more and more prevalent. Since this is the case, I sincerely hope that future work in the field of

postmemory will take my point that imagination mediates between memory and postmemory as a given. With this understanding of the phenomenon, literary scholars can contribute much to the field of postmemory studies and the burgeoning study of postmemory-enabled and -invested productions.

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